

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION Journal

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California's Workhorse Highway p. 6

The Wildlife Connection p. 11

A Lifeline for California's Smaller Cities p. 15

The Intermodal Hamburger p. 25

On the Road to Happy Camp p. 29



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Director's Corner

Anyone who still is carrying around the old notion that Caltrans is just the "highway department" needs to spend a little time with the current issue of the Journal of the California Department of Transportation.

In these pages you will find our people swimming in the murky waters of the San Francisco Bay to preserve eel grass, and climbing the rugged coastal mountains of Orange County to extend the range of mountain lions.

You'll find us working to preserve the architectural heritage of the city of Lemon Grove, and providing the necessary support so that people who need public transit between Redding and Eureka can have it.



Jeff Morales

You'll find us helping to build an interconnection so that transit-dependent people at the U.S.-Mexican border will have a smoother transition (right through the middle of a McDonald's Restaurant) from bicycles and intercity buses to San Diego's Red Cars. And the department's new guidance for Caltrans projects on our state's main streets will offset decades of concentration on through-traffic and focus again on the livability of our cities and towns.

And yet, we remain proud of our responsibility for safe and efficient intercity highways—and so you'll find us providing for a safer crossing of U.S. 101 near Prunedale (while taking extraordinary measures to stem erosion and keep nearby streams clear) and assuring that a scenic mountain highway is open and unimpeded by landslides between Yreka and the Hoopa Indian Reservation near Willow Creek in northern California.

And while all of this reflects a growing sensitivity to our surroundings, Caltrans has for many years—even before passage of the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act—consulted with local communities and natural resource agencies to attempt to ameliorate the effects of our projects.

We're getting better at it and I want us to get even better in the future.

Anyone who really knows Caltrans—and I think you can learn a lot about us from these pages—knows that our extraordinary range of disciplines, interests and expertise qualifies us to take on just about any major transportation job that the world wants to throw at us, and to do it well.

Jeff Morales



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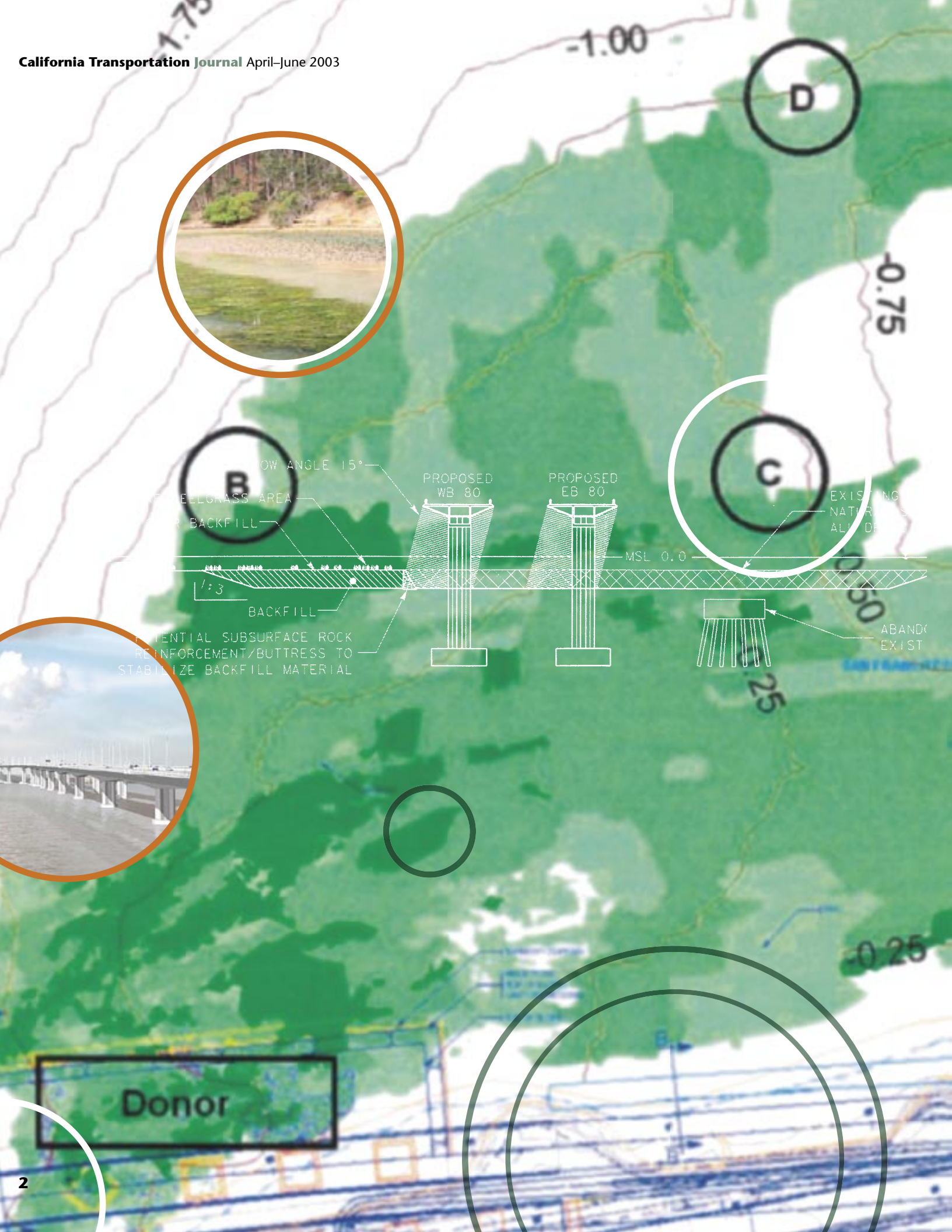
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Down the Eelgrass Path



Photos by John Huseby

Eelgrass—so named not because it provides habitat for slippery creatures, but because it looks like them—is providing an opportunity for a more vigorous approach in District 4 to obtaining the permission from the myriad agencies with which Caltrans must work, to keep big projects moving.

The district has established the Office of Natural Science and Permits, an effort to develop a “one-stop shop” through which applications for permits from the resource agencies will be funneled.

Jeffrey Jensen, the Office Chief, is a compact man, just starting to attain a head of steely gray hair that may or may not grow grayer with his new assignment. He speaks carefully and succinctly about his new task. His unit’s mission is to lead Caltrans project development units through the tortuous process of gaining permits from as many as a dozen agencies, any one of whose refusal to cooperate may spell doom for a project—a process that even an eel might find too labyrinthine to get through.

Jensen came by his position by treading a path that was decidedly different from that trod by most Caltrans project development personnel. A 1984 graduate of Stanford University in public policy, he began his career in public service mediating disputes between landlords and tenants in the Bay Area before moving on to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and then the California Coastal Commission.

Two and a half years ago, he moved to Caltrans, working as an environmental planner for the Toll Bridge Program. District 4 has tabbed him to coordinate the permitting effort because of his experience with the agencies from which the department must obtain the permits, and his experience working on the San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge East Span Seismic Safety Project.

“My former colleagues at the permitting agencies like to tell me that I’ve gone to the ‘dark side,’” Jensen says.

The permit office is part of a larger effort by District 4 to improve the way it deals with the agencies that have enormous sway over its mammoth building program—more than \$4 billion tied up in projects that must run the permit obstacle course. This effort includes paying for staff positions in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Fish and Wildlife Service and BCDC.

“These permits involve complex issues,” Jensen says. “First, there’s the matter of expertise. The agencies react

continued

more favorably to a knowledgeable, familiar face. And often, in project development, the designer to whom the permits fall may be new to the process for obtaining them, may be unfamiliar with the permitting agencies and the laws and regulations that drive them. They may not have a full appreciation of the agency's mission. I think I can help to bring some clarity to this issue."

"Obviously, this is a large organizational effort, both on the part of Caltrans and the resource agencies," Jensen says. "Ultimately, obtaining a permit will involve expertise from landscape, engineering, architects, planners, project managers, as well as the people from the natural sciences area."

"There is also a need to start early, when project decisions can still be altered to avoid impacts to the environment. It's important to realize," he says, "that we have departmental direction not to harm the environment and to enhance it if we can. That direction has to be internalized in the project development process early on."

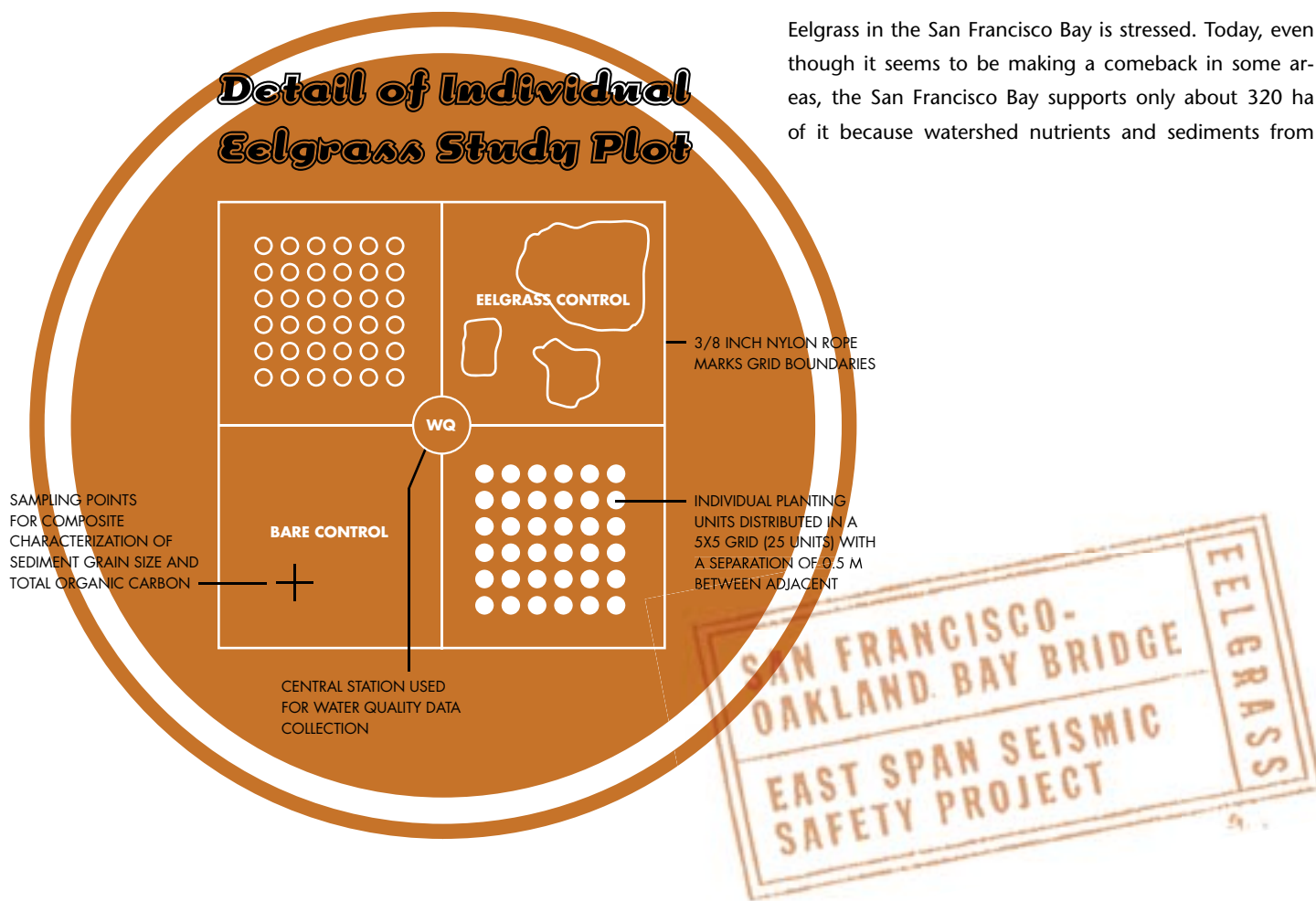
"And if, early on, the permitting agencies are made aware of our project constraints, and they are big ones—financial, time, constructability and safety constraints—they may be able to take a more flexible approach or, at the very least, find ways to help us through their processes."

In the Bay Area's sophisticated environmental milieu, this approach is essential.

"The eelgrass project developed as part of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge East Span Seismic Safety Project is a good example of what can be done," Jensen says.

Eelgrass grows in a narrow latitude between the surface of bay waters and a depth of about one meter. It clarifies water by trapping sediments and provides food and shelter for a number of species. It is a nursery area for finned fish and shellfish and almost all of the anadromous fish found along the Pacific coast. Herring spawn on eelgrass leaves, and young salmon and smelt use it for shelter before heading out to sea. It is an important resource for migratory birds and other waterfowl, such as black brant, that feed directly on them.

Eelgrass in the San Francisco Bay is stressed. Today, even though it seems to be making a comeback in some areas, the San Francisco Bay supports only about 320 ha of it because watershed nutrients and sediments from



upstream dredging and filling cloud the water and retard its growth. Eelgrass studies show that it expands and contracts dramatically due to environmental influences such as turbidity, which appears to be associated with El Niño weather patterns that flush sediment into the bay.

About 1.5 ha of eelgrass lie directly in areas to be filled for construction of the replacement span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. A channel to be dredged to allow barges access to the construction zone also will affect the eelgrass.

Getting approval for these construction activities requires several measures, including avoiding impacts as much as possible by installing fencing and marking the eelgrass beds as environmentally sensitive areas. Where the beds cannot be avoided, Caltrans will minimize the effects as much as possible by implementing a turbidity control program, narrowing the barge access channel, using rock riprap as a tidal berm and using temporary trestles for construction access.

Caltrans will also mitigate for lost eelgrass by harvesting plants from the construction area, restoring the area after construction, constructing rock slope protection to provide upland areas for wildlife and building a shorebird roosting habitat nearby. It will provide \$2.5 million to develop aquatic habitat at the East Shore State Park and \$8 million to facilitate restoration of about 1500 ha of diked baylands at Skaggs Island.

Other environmental mitigations include deadening the sound from pile-driving, providing \$3.5 million to restore salmon habitat in south and central San Francisco Bay, treating storm water runoff and providing roosts for cormorants on the new bridge.

"With a dedicated environmental team, we got our permits," says Jensen. "These were obtained through extensive coordination and negotiation from the California Department of Fish and Game, BCDC, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. A large part of that was working cooperatively and building a degree of trust with the agencies' staffs."

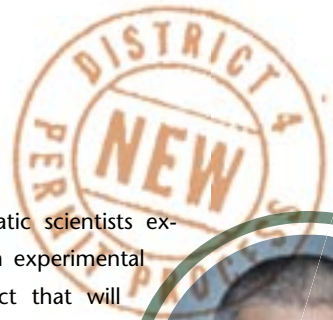
Caltrans and Bay Area aquatic scientists expect to learn much from an experimental eelgrass transplanting project that will precede the actual replanting. Among the expected results are determining survival rates, the influence of the size of plantings, effects of trimming, effects of donor sites, use of elevated sand plateaus, and so on.

Caltrans has already performed experiments to transplant eight separate tracts of eelgrass at the Emeryville Flats, creating sandy, underwater plateaus using materials dredged near Angel Island and Presidio shoals. The various plots, a total of .05 ha in all, were planted with eelgrass in August and September of last year. Planting involves donning a wet suit, diving to the bay floor and anchoring the plugs of eelgrass that were harvested earlier to the bottom. So far, the plantings appear successful. A report on the planting indicates that "the planted units exhibit a healthy appearance with the eelgrass blades floating vertically." Specialists will continue to check them at 24 and 48 weeks after the planting. This success will pave the way for the full planting of about 5 ha along at East Shore Park.

The ultimate mitigation entails finding sites in the East Shore State Park, potentially raising the bay floor so it will play host to the eelgrass, planting, controlling invasive species and maintaining the eelgrass.

"I think the eelgrass restoration is a pretty good illustration of how to work with the permitting agencies," Jensen says. "We got the agencies in early and we worked together with them to develop a plan for the mitigation. In a real sense, this is not just a Caltrans plan; it is an interagency plan. And I think it goes directly to the department's policy of leaving the environment just as good as or better than we found it when we started the project."

—Gene Berthelsen



Jeffrey Jensen,
Office Chief





Photos by Jon Hirtz

CALIFORNIA'S WORKHORSE HIGHWAY

**Bringing State Route 99
into the 21st Century**

DURING THE 1950s, WHEN THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM WAS BEING LAID OUT, DECISION-MAKERS IN THE CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS—THE ORGANIZATION THAT PRECEDED CALTRANS—MADE A SIGNIFICANT STRATEGIC CHOICE.

Route 99



They could designate State Route 99 as California's major north-south Interstate Route, thereby securing 92 percent of federal funds for any improvement project on it, or they could designate a whole new route that would run down the west side of the San Joaquin Valley for use of the federal money.

The Division of Highways chose the new route, for a complex of reasons. These included providing better service between the San Francisco Bay Area and the Los Angeles Basin, opening the west side of California's great agricultural lowlands to development, and one other: constructing what is now Interstate 5 on new alignment would maximize the federal dollars flowing to California and, as a byproduct, produce the largest number of construction contracts and jobs.

In the meantime, the Division of Highways could place a series of Band-Aids on the valley's main artery that connected Bakersfield, Fresno, Stockton and Sacramento.

One may argue the wisdom or folly of the decision; regardless, because Interstate 5 was planned and largely built before the National Environmental Policy Act was enacted, it did get built. Arguably it would have taken years, perhaps decades longer if the state had waited.

Perhaps it never would have been built.

Route 99, a 400 km workhorse serving the largest number of commuters, farm-to-market commerce, recreational, school and business trips of about 30 communities in eight counties between the Tehachis south of Bakersfield and Sacramento, had to continue operating in many stretches as a four-lane expressway. As the interim projects were constructed, they looked like a patchwork, too, with architectural features, signs, barriers and engineering features from several eras of highway building.

"Route 99 is the lifeline of the valley," says Mike Leonardo, Caltrans District Director in Fresno. "And interestingly, because it passes through the major cities of the San Joaquin Valley, the people along it consider it 'their' highway, as opposed to Interstate 5. They are concerned, obviously, about its ability to serve the transportation need, but in addition they are concerned about its appearance as well as the way it enters their cities. There is a great concern, these days, about 'gateways.'"

Route 99 generally carries twice as much traffic as Interstate 5, including about 25 000 trucks a day. At its northern end as it approaches Sacramento, Route 99 carries almost 200 000 vehicles daily; its volume generally varies from about 35 000 vehicles daily in rural areas to more than 100 000 in the valley's larger cities—and that's growing. By contrast, Interstate 5 carries only about half that as it parallels Route 99; only near downtown Stockton does its volume rise to about 100 000 vehicles daily.

Recent population growth in the San Joaquin Valley is outpacing that of California as a whole. Spillover from Los Angeles is inundating Bakersfield, as it is from the Bay Area in Tracy, Manteca, Modesto and Stockton. The morning veil of smog on the valley's horizon is becoming more frequent. Rush hour traffic patrols direct commuters on the local radio. And today, the cities along the route are growing rapidly, making the need for a new look at transportation needs along Route 99 all that more pressing.

Caltrans Districts 6 and 10, which have responsibility for this Main Street of the Central Valley, are responding. The districts have now embarked on a program to bring the valley's main gut up to 21st century standards with a \$1.2 billion program announced by Governor Gray Davis last fall.

continued



Route 99, with twice the travel of Interstate 5, connects most of the San Joaquin Valley's major cities and is its workhorse highway.



San Joaquin Valley Programmed Capacity Projects

County	Description	Program	Phase	Cost	Year
San Joaquin	Reconstruct Rte 99/Hammer Lane	STIP	PA&ED	\$21.3	03/04
	Widen Rte 99 to six lanes between Rte 4 and Hammer Lane	STIP	PS&E/RW	\$32.5	03/04
	Widen Route 99 to six lanes between Arch Road and Route 4	STIP	PA&ED	\$109.0	05/06
	Construct Arch Road Interchange	STIP	Construction	\$29.6	99/00
	Reconstruct 99/120 East Separation and Yosemite Avenue	STIP	PA&ED	\$8.6	03/04
	Construct Jack Tone Road I/C	STIP	Construction	\$23.2	98/99
Stanislaus	Modify Pelandale Overcrossing	STIP	PA&ED	\$57.5	05/06
	Reconstruct Whitmore Overcrossing	STIP	PS&E/RW	\$16.8	04/05
Merced	Widen Freeway and Bridges at various locations near Delhi	STIP	Construction	\$27.9	98/99
	Widen to 6 lanes between Arena Way and Hammatt Avenue near Livingston	STIP	PS&E/RW	\$30.7	03/04
	Convert from expressway to freeway between Atwater Overhead and Arena Way	STIP	PS&E/RW	\$36.3	03/04
	Convert from expressway to freeway between McHenry Road and Childs Avenue	STIP	PS&E/RW	\$54.8	03/04
	Convert from expressway to freeway between Buchanan Hollow Road and Healey Road	STIP/TCRP	PA&ED	\$127.6	05/06
	Convert from 4-lane expressway to 6-lane freeway between Madera County Line and Buchanan Hollow Road	STIP/TCRP	PA&ED	\$82.4	05/06
Madera	Convert from 4-lane expressway to 6-lane freeway between Avenue 21 and 99/152 separation	STIP	PA&ED	\$42.9	04/05
	Modify Interchanges between Gateway Drive and South Madera Overcrossing	STIP	PA&ED	\$6.1	03/04
Fresno	Reconstruct Shaw Avenue Interchange	TCRP	PA&ED	\$25.1	
	Convert to 6-lane freeway between Route 99/201 Separation and Floral Avenue in Selma	STIP/TCRP	PS&E/RW	\$49.7	02/03
Tulare	Widen to 6-lane freeway between Goshen Overhead and Conejo Avenue	STIP	PA&ED	\$95.5	04/05
	Convert to 6-lane freeway from Prosperity Avenue to North Goshen Overhead near Tulare	STIP	PA&ED	\$44.9	10/11
	Modify Prosperity Avenue Interchange	STIP	PS&E/RW	\$2.9	02/03
Kern	Reconstruct Cecil Avenue	STIP	PA&ED	\$14.8	02/03
	Widen 7th Standard Road to four lanes near Bakersfield	STIP/TCRP	PA&ED	\$9.3	
	Construct sound wall at White Lane Interchange in Bakersfield	STIP	PA&ED	\$4.1	

Route 99

Fiscal uncertainties are likely to stretch the timetable for the ambitious plan, according to Jim Nicholas, Chief of Programming, but Caltrans will retain its commitment to improving the route.

The overall Caltrans plan for the route encompasses 235 projects that span the spectrum of transportation construction: almost \$1 billion in capacity projects, \$144 million in rehabilitation, \$80 million in safety and operations and \$40 million in appearance and soundwall projects.

About 30 of the capacity projects, with a contract value of more than \$200 million, are already under construction, says Dana Cowell, District 10 planning chief. These include the Arch Road Interchange just south of Stockton, a \$30 million project that will feature the first single-point urban interchange in the valley, and a \$27 million widening of Route 99 near Delhi in Merced County.

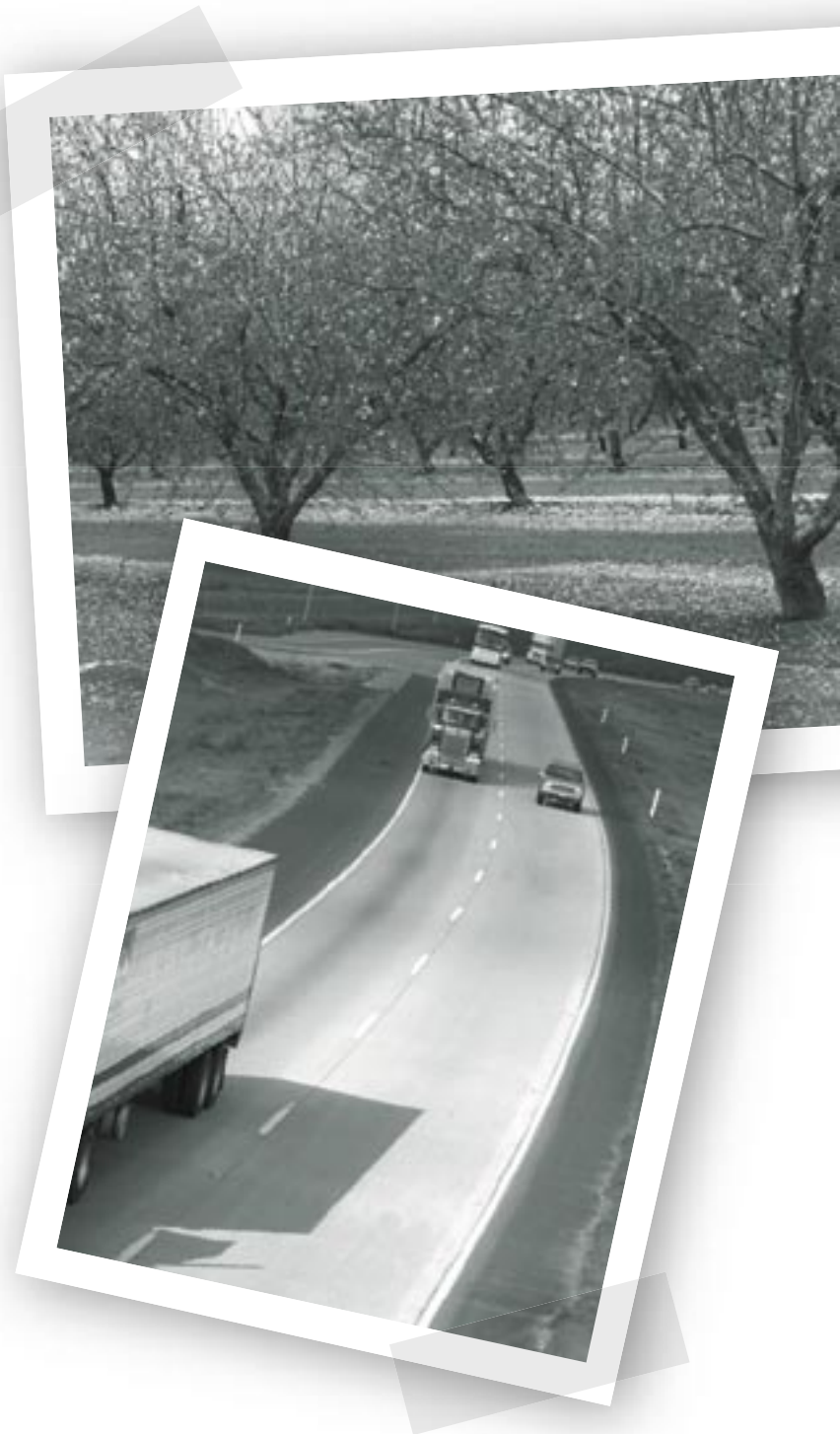
"This highway remains a very high priority both for Caltrans and for the local and regional agencies," Cowell says, adding that Route 99 essentially, at 50 years old, is an "antique."

"Not only are these agencies very vigorous in pursuing a higher status for the projects, a number of them are putting their money on the line with a 50 percent match from local RTIP funding," he says.

Thirty projects, worth more than \$211 million, have received funding approval and are being designed, with right of way being acquired. Among these are a \$32 million project to widen the route from four to six lanes in Stockton, conversion of the route from a four-lane expressway to a six-lane freeway near Livingston in Merced County at a cost of about \$31 million, and a \$36 million conversion from expressway to freeway near Atwater, also in Merced County.

"Probably our first priority is to convert the entire route to freeway," says Mike Leonardo. Currently, in the two districts combined, there are about 45 km of expressway that contain more than 25 at-grade intersections. Any of these, given an abundance of large, slow-moving trucks and farm equipment crossing the highway, presents the potential for a catastrophic accident."

continued



**THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY'S AGRICULTURAL BOUNTY
RIDES TO MARKET ON ROUTE 99.**



AN INTERSECTION NEAR FAIRMEAD IN MERCED COUNTY PROVIDES ACCESS TO THE MAMMOTH ORANGE, THE LAST REMAINING OF A NUMBER OF ORANGE-SHAPED ROADSIDE STANDS THAT DISPENSED ORANGE JUICE AND HAMBURGERS ALONG ROUTE 99 FOR SEVERAL DECADES.

One of these, an intersection near Fairmead in Merced County, provides access to the Mammoth Orange, the last remaining of a number of orange-shaped roadside stands that dispensed orange juice and hamburgers along Route 99 for several decades. Caltrans is trying to work out what would happen to the establishment, which has drawn nostalgic attention from travelers throughout the West, if the intersection were closed and its access removed.

"After that, further in the future, we would hope to improve the route at least to six lanes between Stockton and the Tehachapis," Leonardo says.

About 30 km of expressway remain to be converted to full freeway in District 10, by five projects. Two of the five are fully funded and set to go to bid in the spring of 2004. The district is currently working on several other projects that are funded for design and right of way purchase, and are expected to get underway when funds become available.

In Fresno County, District 6 is preparing a \$50 million project for advertising to convert the route from four lanes to six near Selma. These projects are likely to be affected by the fiscal shortfall.

As you drive south from Sacramento it is possible to count seven different types of bridge rail on overcrossings over the highway. A master plan, now under development, would enhance individual community identities, develop design concepts and aesthetic guidelines and establish themes for landscaping, colors, medians, structures and so on. That plan owes much to recent efforts—covered in the July/August 2002 issue of the Journal ("A Gateway to Fresno")—to improve the route through Fresno. "Civic leaders of other cities along the route took a look at what the department had done in Fresno," says Mike Leonardo, "and they wanted the same things for their cities."

As a result, a multi-county planning effort is underway under the auspices of the Great Valley Center in Modesto, to unify and beautify the route. Caltrans expects that all of the projects will conform to that master plan.

The Governor's overall plan for the route envisions expenditure of \$40 million toward this effort for planting, soundwall and other roadside enhancements.—*Gene Berthelsen*

THE WILDLIFE CONNECTION

COAL CANYON PRESERVE PROJECT

To a Northern Californian used to looking at green grasses, pine trees and the rushing waters of mountain streams, the Santa Ana Mountains' Coal Canyon, with its woolly scrub brush, cactus and denuded rocks, doesn't look like it amounts to much.

But it amounts to plenty: a priceless land bridge between the Tecate Cypress Reserve, the Cleveland National Forest and the Irvine Company's Gypsum Canyon Preserve. Linked together by Coal Canyon, they make up a 200 000 ha stewpot of biodiversity that supports hundreds of common and rare species. Without the Coal Canyon linkage, these reserves represent just another piece of a rapidly shrinking southern California ecosystem.

"'Echo system' might be a better term for it," says Sylvia Vega, Caltrans District 12 Environmental Branch Chief and for the past 15 years a key player in the effort to preserve Coal Canyon.

Today, a highly unorthodox \$440 000 District 12 project to take the Coal Canyon Interchange with State Route 91 out of use is a manifestation of Vega's work with a number of Southern California resource agencies to do just that.

Vega first became aware of the value and potential of Coal Canyon when she was a practicing wildlife biologist who was given the responsibility for obtaining permits to clean out an artificial basin that trapped silt and sediment washed down the canyon from upstream disturbances.

At that time, Vega met with Geary Hund, a biologist with the California Department of Parks and Recreation to get permission to enter the park and remove the debris. Hund

continued



ECO-FRIENDLY



The Coal Canyon Interchange sits in the midst of an invaluable land bridge that allows wildlife to migrate between Chino Hills and the Cleveland National Forest.

raised the idea that the land occupied by the State Route 91/Coal Canyon interchange was an invaluable centerpiece that, if turned to different uses, could become a land bridge between Chino Hills and the Cleveland National Forest.

"We were also being made aware that a number of mountain lions were being killed as they attempted to cross the 91, a major, eight lane, interregional route between Orange and Riverside Counties that was further expanded with the addition of toll lanes in 1995 and now carries more than 200 000 vehicles daily.

"Geary Hund expressed the notion that the Coal Canyon Interchange was kind of an interchange to nowhere and that it would be nice if it could be closed to provide animal passage between the two major habitats."

Hund, citing a number of studies, maintained that the eco-region contained a greater diversity of vegetation types than any other area of comparable size in the United States and was one the "hot spots" of biodiversity on earth. Maintenance of the Coal Canyon linkage was critical, he said, to the future ecological health of the Puente-Chino Hills and the Santa Ana Mountains. He quoted from a study that documented the use of the corridor by

six different mountain lions, concluding that the area occupied by the Coal Canyon Interchange was an indispensable link remaining between the Santa Ana Mountains and the Puente-Chino.

"'Nice,' we thought, 'but it isn't gonna happen,'" Vega says. "Both the Yorba Linda and Anaheim general plans designated that location for development. A developer had already purchased the property on the north side of the highway and was planning to construct more than 600 homes near the interchange. The location was a highly desirable area for exclusive, upscale homes, with a spectacular view of the Santa Ana River watershed and a golf course nearby.

But then, in the 1990s, things began to change. Several papers were written by eminent biologists who stressed the connectivity between wildlife areas for maintaining biodiversity, and, concomitantly, the preservation of species.

Then, in the mid-1990s, plans for the homes near the Coal Canyon Interchange fell through—and there was a groundswell to preserve habitat and open space in Southern California. Another influence was that other Caltrans districts were beginning to establish mitigation banks, and Vega began to see the possibility of preserving the area as open space.



COAL CANYON PRESERVE PROJECT

Then along came the Transportation Enhancement Act of 2000, making funds available for environmental enhancement activities. All of these forces together ended in a proposal to use \$15 million in TEA funds to acquire 264 ha of property on the south side of Route 91 to protect a “wildlife corridor of statewide significance.” The Wildlife Conservation Board provided a \$648 000 match. This funding served as the final funding piece to augment \$12 million in conservation lands funds previously allocated to Coal Canyon along with matching funds. Ultimately, more than \$40 million was raised through a combination of public and private funds to purchase land from the St. Clair Company of Newport Beach, which had been ready to go ahead with development of the property. St. Clair, whose property had been appraised at \$50 million after it had been zoned for development, agreed to lower its price by \$10 million.

“This acquisition will secure a critical connection between protected public lands including the Cleveland National Forest, the California Department of Fish and Game Tecate Cypress Reserve, designated lands to the south and Chino Hills State Park, the Prado Basin and other reserve lands,” the TEA application read. “Acquisition of this land will also

protect federally listed species, rare plant communities, a scenic highway corridor and an interregional recreational trail connection.”

All the while, informal discussions continued between Sylvia Vega and Geary Hund.

One remaining piece of the puzzle was the interchange to nowhere: Coal Canyon Interchange, used by fewer than 150 motorists daily and with no connection to any city streets. Even so, what was being proposed was virtually unthinkable: take the interchange out of service. “We just don’t do that,” says Jim Beil, District 12’s Deputy Director for Programming and Project Management. “We are an agency that is used to building new facilities, not closing them down.”

Nevertheless, Beil and others saw the wisdom of decommissioning the interchange. The question was, what would that involve?

“We had old freeway agreements with the County of Orange that were handed down to the City of Yorba Linda and the City of Anaheim,” Beil says. “Did we need to rescind those? The General Plans of Yorba Linda, Anaheim

continued

and the County of Orange all included the interchange. And in this case, while the City of Anaheim was in favor of providing the animal passage at Coal Canyon, the City of Yorba Linda was not particularly receptive. Development of the property on the north side of the highway would have provided tax revenues to that city. Closing the interchange could be seen as causing them a loss of revenue. There was a lot of confusion about local agency jurisdiction over the land recently purchased by State Parks."

The Orange County Transportation Authority would have to revise its Master Plan of Arterial Highways to remove the interchange. A freeway is a controlled access facility—and that applies not only to vehicles entering and leaving the roadway, but to anyone wishing to encroach on the right of way. Several utilities were accessed from the interchange, requiring the district to write locked gate access permits so the utilities companies could continue to perform maintenance on them.

A Caltrans-owned and maintained bicycle trail, the only one in Orange County connecting through the Santa Ana Canyon and part of the Santa Ana Regional Bicycle Trail, also ran through the interchange.

And even though the interchange provided very little traffic service, it did serve one important purpose: it afforded a turnaround for emergency service vehicles, especially those of the California Highway Patrol, which used it frequently.

"Here's another interesting thing not really thought about," Beil says. "There were more than 40 signs that either provided information at the interchange itself or in advance of it. These had to be changed or removed."

Ultimately, a legal analysis indicated that the California Department of Parks and Recreation's actions in acquiring

land on either side of the highway had obviated any necessity for rescinding the freeway agreement because all the obligations of the prior agreement had been met and the adjoining land was now under State jurisdiction.

In January of this year, Caltrans was thus ready to do what it had never done before: close a perfectly good, operating interchange. The \$440 000 Minor "A" project removes pavements from the on- and off-ramps to the Coal Canyon Road and the roadway under the freeway. It provides maintenance and emergency services access through a gated fence for fire departments, State Parks, utility companies and Caltrans as well as a turnaround for the California Highway patrol. And new fencing directs the wildlife under the freeway instead of through a dark, 80 m-long box culvert mostly shunned by animals that were potential prey for the mountain lions.

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is also considering a follow-on project that would channel water from the Coal Canyon watershed through the closed interchange and produce an inviting thoroughfare for all of the wildlife that ranges between Chino Hills and the Cleveland National Forest.

"This project showcases the sensitivity of Caltrans to environmental preservation, while developing and maintaining the freeway system to satisfy customer needs," Governor Gray Davis stated in a press release heralding the start of work on the interchange modification.

That's just fine with Sylvia Vega. "This project protects the environment and reduces Caltrans' maintenance cost," she says. "And we have helped to preserve a precious piece of Southern California."—*Gene Berthelsen*

STATE ROUTE 91



INTERCITY BUS SUBSIDIES

A Lifeline for California's Smaller Cities

Photos by Don Tateishi





**“THERE ARE PEOPLE—ELDERLY
AND LOW INCOME AND STUDENTS,
TRANSIT-DEPENDENT PEOPLE—
WHO NEED THIS SERVICE.”**

Annually, Caltrans spends about \$90 million to subsidize and improve rail service between Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego and other major California cities.

It spends about one twenty-fifth of that—\$3.8 million annually—to assure that bus service connects many of California’s smaller cities. The money, from federal and state funds, pays for operating assistance under the Federal Transit Authority’s 5311(f) Non-Urbanized Area Formula Program.

“The program addresses intercity travel needs of people in the rural areas of the state by funding services that provide them access to intercity bus and transportation networks,” says La Keda Johnson, the Caltrans Division of Mass Transportation administrator for the program.

“It has three objectives,” Johnson says. “It supports connections between smaller communities and the major intercity bus lines, connects smaller cities and helps operators with planning, marketing and capital investment.”

“The California program provides capital, planning and operating funds to support the national program.”

“Essentially,” Johnson says, “what we are doing is to assure that there is an emergency lifeline of public transportation between California’s smaller cities. And to assure that, the federal government allocates up to 15 percent of all public Section 5311 funds for California for such intercity purposes. The governor has to certify that the needs are there. Because Caltrans typically receives more requests than we have federal funds to support, we are able to use the entire amount.”

“It’s an annual competitive application process,” Johnson says. “Caltrans calls for grant applications in March, with a due date for submittal to our districts by June 15. The districts review and rank the applications and forward them to us by June 30.”

The Division of Mass Transportation puts together a committee of representatives of the state and regional



agencies each year to evaluate the proposals, ranking the applications on the amount of local support, whether or not it is likely to continue after the grant runs out and its tie-in with statewide services.

"In 2002-2003, our \$1.5 million, along with local and regional matching funds, is supporting 19 services," Johnson says. "These include operating assistance for several lines between smaller cities, vehicle purchases and funding of a study of a bus facility in Fort Bragg."

Bus service between Redding and Eureka on State Route 299 is a good example of the kind of service the program provides—this one with a first-year grant of \$211 304. The program is providing \$243 090 for the second year of service.

Redding and its surrounding communities have a population of 170 000; Eureka and surrounding communities, including Arcata, 50 000. Each has an airport and major

north-south transportation facilities. Both communities contain large populations of elderly, low income and student residents.

"Still, says Michael Lucas, Transit coordinator for Caltrans District 1, "there had been no bus service between the two cities for six years when the Caltrans grant was awarded."

Now, Greyhound buses, the only link between Greyhound's coastal and inland lines between Portland and the San Francisco Bay Area, depart Redding for Eureka at 4:40 am and 5:15 pm daily, with stops in Weaverville, Willow Creek and Arcata. Buses leave Eureka for Redding twice daily, at 9:25 am and 5:45 pm. Riders pay \$28 one-way or \$56 for a round trip.

Without the service, anyone who is transit-dependent and has to use public transportation between Redding and Eureka would have to take the bus down US 101 to San Francisco then transfer to another bus making its way up Interstate 5—a trip that would take a day and a half. The trip between Eureka and Redding on the subsidized service takes about three and a half hours.

"The Caltrans grant represents half of what Greyhound expects to lose from the bus route in the first year," Lucas says. "We are grateful to Greyhound for providing the service even though we know it is not profitable."

Currently, the two round trips serve about 40 people daily.

"This is a startup," Lucas says. "The first two years of a potential three-year contract; Greyhound and its local partners will apply for the third year of operating expense in the upcoming application cycle. We hope that by the end of the three-year period, there will be enough customers to allow Greyhound to continue the service at or near a profit—that's the idea."

"The fact is," Lucas says, "there are people—elderly and low income and students, transit-dependent people—who need this service. I know one thing for sure. That is, if we are unable to continue with it, my phone will ring off the hook."—Gene Berthelsen

THIS OLD

THE LEE HOUSE ODYSSEY

HOUSE



WHEN H. LEE (Mr. Lee's first name appears to have been lost in antiquity) built his grand Tudor-style residence on top of a hill in Lemon Grove in 1928, he could hardly have anticipated the odyssey on which it would embark several decades later.

That odyssey—at a cost of about 100 times the original construction cost—is emblematic of the lengths to which Caltrans occasionally must go to preserve cultural values and observe the imperatives inherent in a city's pride.

Caltrans made its first acquaintance with Mr. Lee's splendid house in 1992 when it began to assemble the properties necessary to build the modern-day State Route 125, which provides an easterly outer ring of mobility around the San Diego conurbation.

"Analysis by architectural historians found three structures in the path of the highway that were of historic value," says Gustavo Dallarda, the current project manager for the soon-to-be opened route whose development, he says, has outlasted three project managers and three district directors—one of whom, Pedro Orso-Delgado, is himself a former project manager on the 125.

"We were able to avoid one of the structures completely and to affect only the setting of another," Dallarda says. "But the Lee House was found to be significant—and highly prized by the city of Lemon Grove. We felt it was important to work with the city to try to preserve this bit of its history. Thus, we agreed to relocate and refurbish the home. That was in 1993."

continued





H. Lee's house, now being refurbished in the city center of Lemon Grove, will serve as a gathering place for local residents.

H. Lee had long since departed and the home was purchased from its second owner, George Cremer, who relocated in 1996. Caltrans then boarded up the home in anticipation of moving it to the Lemon Grove civic center when clearing of the right of way began.

Then the troubles began.

The Tudor architecture, with its wooden accents embedded in plaster, presented problems. "The wood was infested with termites," Dallarda says. "That created a need for craftsmen to remove the damaged wooden members and replace them."

The massive brick fireplaces that characterized the house would not survive any move and would have to be torn down brick-by-brick, stored and reassembled when the house reached its destination. The shingled roof began to fall apart. A non-historic family room that had been added during the 1960s had to be removed.

A swarm of tenacious bees found its way into the walls, busily manufacturing honey from the nearby lemon blossoms as they had been bred to do, discoloring the walls and dripping honey about. Then, in 1998, an unknown arsonist somehow got around the Caltrans security measures and set fire to the interior. The fire was extinguished—the old house seems to have resisted the arson pretty successfully—but that just added another to its set of woes.

When grading for this portion of Route 125 began in 2000 Caltrans first moved the home to an interim location at Troy and Golden Avenues, about 200 m from its original site. Twice, a moving company was called in to move the house out of the path of construction because work ran ahead of negotiations with the city; eventually Mr. Lee's house ended up perched atop a mound of dirt near Palm Middle School and covered in tarps with a beehive protruding from a corner, as local historical society members and Caltrans architectural historians worried whether or not the home would make it to its ultimate destination.

"We kept removing the bees," Dallarda says, "but they kept returning. Apparently the house was very attractive to them." It was not until the home was actually moved to its final location—and the bees, along with their honeycombs and honey, were relocated by a professional beekeeper—that their pattern of return was broken. Even today, as the restoration goes forward, a few homesick bees still visit Mr. H. Lee's house.

Finally, in 2002, Caltrans and the City of Lemon Grove agreed on the financing. The department and city also came to agreement on Americans with Disability Act requirements at the home's ultimate location near the city center within a few meters of an earlier restoration of the First Congregational Church of Christ, and details of landscaping that included a fountain, landscaped walks and seating areas accented with lemon trees and rose bushes.

Still there was another problem: the house would have to cross the Metropolitan Transit District's Red Line trolley tracks. "The house was too tall to fit under the catenary wires," Dallarda says. "And the transit district was very reluctant to allow the wires to be severed."

"For several weeks, we considered a number of solutions. These included cutting the house to pieces and reassembling it on the site. We even considered getting three cranes and lifting it over the wires, which are approximately six meters in the air, but the movers concluded that it couldn't be done."

"Finally, we reached agreement with MTDB that we could sever the wires, but that was not a simple action. The wires are under high tension so we had to build temporary downguy foundations and assemblies to anchor the wires before they were severed. Then we had to guarantee that if the spliced wires separated at any time during the next 10 years, Caltrans would be responsible for damages and restoration. Transit service was suspended between 9 pm and midnight between two stations to provide a longer window so we coordinated with MTDB to have buses take people from one station to another."

"Finally on the night of July 12, 2002, everything was ready. It was a huge party for the town of Lemon Grove," says Pedro Orso-Delgado. "The mayor concocted a drink of lemon juice to symbolize the city of Lemon Grove, orange juice to symbolize Caltrans, and vodka. (I'm not sure what that symbolized.) The entire city turned out, and there was a huge cheer as the house moved over the tracks. We were successful within the eight-hour window that MTDB had given us."

Today, the house, whose roof is still encased in blue plastic, sits on its new foundation, where it will serve as a social gathering place and meeting hall for the people of Lemon Grove. Its chimneys have been rebuilt and it is on its way to a grandeur that it had not seen since its early years as Mr. H. Lee's home. Lemon Grove City Manager Bob Richardson says that the city will use volunteers to restore it, as they did the nearby parsonage.

Was it worth the million-dollar cost and a decade of headaches for everyone?

"Caltrans made a promise," says Gustavo Dallarda. "Lemon Grove has a graceful meeting place and a good reminder of its history. We've kept our promise and our credibility. That's probably worth a million."—
Gene Berthelsen

**⁶³CALTRANS made a promise...
Lemon Grove has a graceful meeting
place and a good reminder of its his-
tory. We've kept our promise and our
credibility. That's probably worth a
million."**

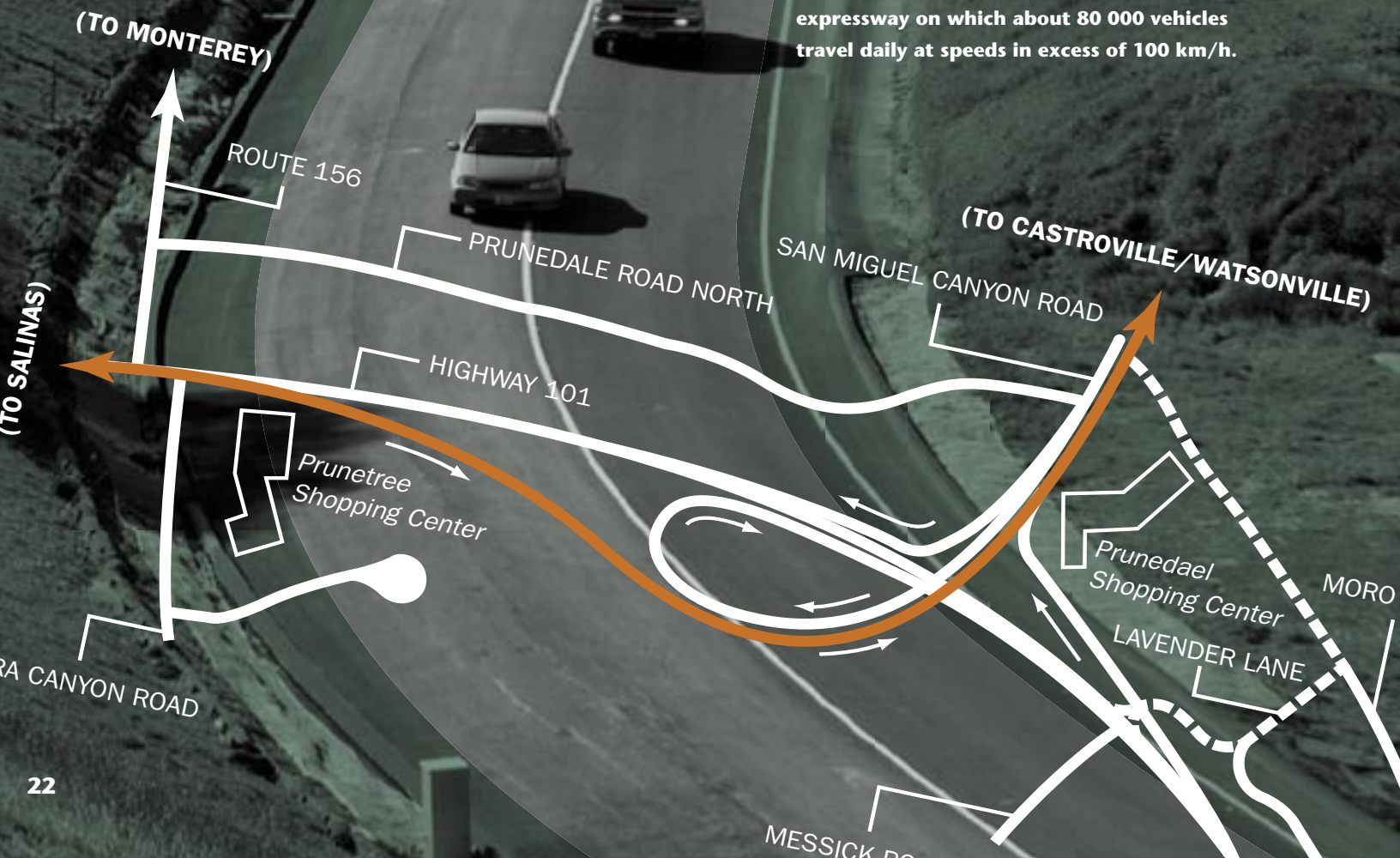


longest left-turn pocket in california

The San Miguel Canyon Road Interchange Project

Until recently, if you wanted to turn onto San Miguel Canyon Road as you were traveling northbound along U.S. 101 near Prunedale, you would have had to situate yourself in the longest left turn pocket in the State of California—almost 0.5 km long.

A turn pocket that long will hold at least 60 cars and, through the afternoon peak periods, the queue would overflow into the adjacent through-lane, affecting the speed of the northbound traffic. Turning left across the southbound traffic could entail creeping along for as long as 20 minutes for a chance to dart across an expressway on which about 80 000 vehicles travel daily at speeds in excess of 100 km/h.



Photos by John Huseby

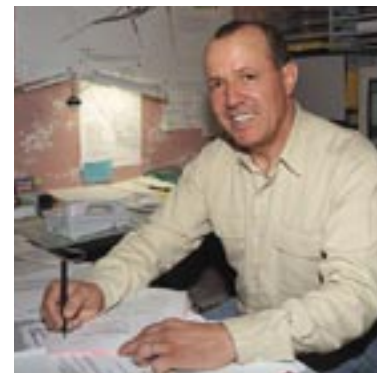
The problem of getting across U.S. 101 became especially acute in heavy tourism-travel periods or when a major event, such as the Pebble Beach Golf Tournament at nearby Carmel, put an extra burden on the highway. In the three-year planning period for a project to replace the turn pocket with an interchange, 51 accidents occurred, including one fatality and 39 injuries—a relatively modest accident rate, given the precarious nature of making a left turn at this location.

Even so, the just-completed San Miguel Canyon Road Interchange Project, to replace the turn pocket, probably provides as clear an example of a project that dramatically improves public safety as any in recent memory. Certainly it will reduce the anxiety of those having to make the move.

Abdalla Naas—a 13-year veteran of Caltrans construction wars in Districts 4, the North Region (Districts 1, 2 and 3) and the Central Region (Districts 5, 6 and 10)—is the proud Resident Engineer who, at approximately 9 pm on January 16 of this year, turned the first traffic onto the \$8.5 million interchange, constructed by Graniterock of Aromas (near Gilroy).

“This is the largest project to have been completed in Monterey County in 20 years,” Naas says. “It hasn’t been all that easy. Once the excavation of about 175 000 m³ of earthwork started, it became evident that we were dealing with far more erosive soils than had been anticipated in design. That, combined with an extraordinarily wet winter in 2001, meant that we had to develop a plan that exceeded \$600 000 to supplement the normal Storm Water Protection and Pollution Plan Best Management Practices. It also meant changing the drainage plan in the field.”

Today, on a sunny January day, it is easy to see why the erosion control was so costly. At the top of a 75-m high cut slope, two parallel ditches divert runoff away from the slope. Rolls of fiber are anchored into the slope to slow runoff and trap sediment. Heavy netting controls surface movement, heavy-gauge polyethylene plastic shrouds disturbed soil to keep the rain off, and tall grass is sending its exceptionally deep, soil-clenching roots into the mountainside.



Abdalla Naas

continued



"Seeing a project like this being completed is one of the most enjoyable moments a Resident Engineer can have."



Naas describes the sandy soil as "having the consistency of soup and spurting like lava" in wet weather. "During construction, it was necessary to remove eroded material continually and to lay back the slopes in attempts to stabilize them, and we've done that," Naas says. "We believe we have solved the problem."

"Basically," Naas says, "once it became evident how unstable the soil in the slopes was, we knew the money allotted to the erosion control items was not enough. We eliminated them and wrote a Contract Change Order. To date, we have exceeded the initial item estimate by almost 600 percent. During the final stage of the project—plant establishment—hundreds of trees and shrubs that are native to the area will be planted to further stabilize the area."

Another important consideration of the project was providing information to local and interregional travelers. U.S. 101 runs most of the length of California and provides major travel service along the Pacific coast between the San Francisco Bay area and the Los Angeles Basin. It is one of California's most important interregional routes. To provide needed information, District 5 engaged the services of Barnett, Cox and Associates, which, through Tia Gindick and Associates of Monterey, provided information to travelers and businesses about detours, lane closures and travel impediments. Gindick achieved the

project's informational objectives through continuous updated news releases and announcements, open houses, personal visits to business owners and by maintaining a project Web site.

The San Miguel Canyon Road Interchange Project, which started in June of 2000, provided a new northbound off-ramp directly and safely to San Miguel, a new northbound on-ramp to the U.S. 101 from San Miguel and a new southbound offramp instead of the existing right turn onto San Miguel. It also provided safer access to the nearby Prunedale Shopping Center for local residents, improved the San Miguel southbound U.S. 101 on-ramp, eliminated several driveway connections, provided new connections to Lavender Lane, and repaved Lavender Lane and Moro Roads, which were used as a detour while construction went forward.

"Seeing a project like this being completed is one of the most enjoyable moments a Resident Engineer can have," says Naas. "You can see that you have dealt with a serious public need. You can look back on all of the disagreements and negotiations with the contractor and be proud of representing the people of California. But most of all, you can look and see that here is a facility that provides safer travel for people. It wasn't there when you started."

—Gene Berthelsen

The Intermodal Hamburger

The San Ysidro Transit Center

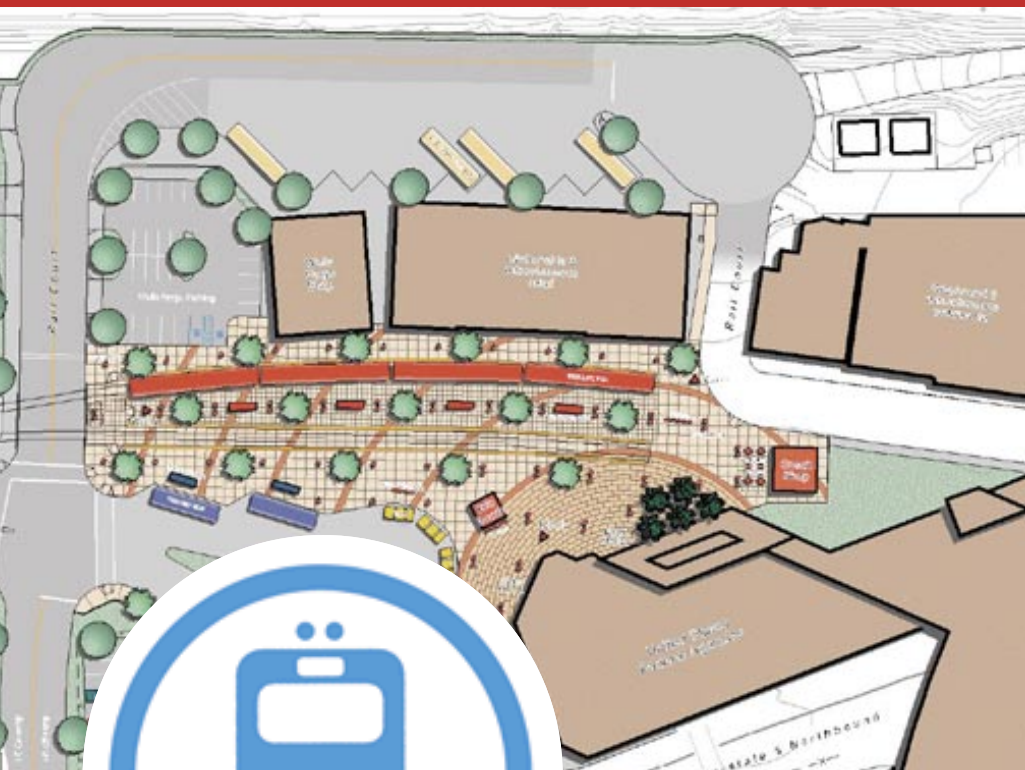


What surely must be one of the largest McDonald's Hamburger stores in the world virtually straddles the border between California and Mexico at San Ysidro. Certainly, it is one of the most unusual: emblazoned on its facade, right next to the golden arches, are the words, "McDonald's Transit Center."

Given McDonald's marketing savvy, it is no accident that this hamburger store sits in the middle of one of the busiest intermodal transit exchange points in California, and that soon hundreds of hungry travelers will be tromping daily past the Big Macs, Chicken Flatbread Sandwiches and Big and Tasties.

Photos by Don Tateishi

continued



Here, more than 28 000 rail and bus riders of San Diego's famed Red Cars and Metropolitan Transit Development Board buses mingle with thousands of pedestrians, bicyclists, auto drop-offs, interregional bus passengers, jitneys, taxis and kiss-and-riders.

The swirl of activity created by these travelers takes place within a few meters of where thousands of people cross the US-Mexico border in vehicles and on foot under the close scrutiny of the U. S. Customs and Immigration and Naturalization services—and the terminus of busy Interstate 5. In the most recent year tabulated, more than 40 million people crossed the border at this location.

"This is the busiest land crossing port of entry in the world," says Bill Figge, Public Transportation Branch Chief in Caltrans District 11, headquartered in San Diego. "When MTDB came to us with a project to try to provide a more efficient transfer mechanism in this location, we saw an immediate reason to participate."

One of those reasons was that the chaotic mix of activities at the border was affecting vehicles trying to access Interstate 5—where more than 110 000 vehicles daily

accelerate down the onramp from the beginning of I-5—resulting both in congestion and a higher-than-average accident rate. The trolley station at San Ysidro generates about 20 percent of all transit patronage on the rail system and is the busiest in the San Diego area.

"There simply wasn't room at that location to accommodate everything that was happening," Figge says.

To ease congestion at the transfer point, the State will contribute about \$4 million to a \$21 million project to build an enlarged pedestrian plaza, independent local and intercity bus bays, a new Rail Court entrance through the McDonald's facility, and new lighting, drainage and other facilities.

The project will ease congestion around the station area and improve mobility generally in the Interstate 5 corridor. "Right now, that place gets really crowded, and at odd times," says Figge. "People cross the border into Tijuana to party on Friday and Saturday nights and come back to the U.S.A. to find that the trolley doesn't start running until 5 am. By that time, the plaza is so full of people that the trolley has difficulty getting through the crowds, and that can be hazardous."



The project is expected to generate about 11 000 new weekday riders through the station daily and significantly more at special events. That adds up to more than 2.5 million new transit riders a year.

The project, whose cost will total about \$21 million, is expected to generate about 11 000 new riders through the station on an average day and significantly more at special events. That adds up to more than 2.5 million new transit riders a year.

What MTDB was proposing was to close the existing East San Ysidro Boulevard—a narrow, congested frontage for a warren of border-related shops—and substitute for it a graceful turnaround with bays for buses, taxis, jitneys and auto drop-offs. But that would have displaced a secure parking lot used by Customs and INS personnel who had a legitimate concern for their safety, given the security aspects of monitoring sometimes-threatening border activities.

Customs and INS were willing to part with their parking lot if another secure parking area could be provided for them. They looked to Caltrans for it.

"We were aware that we had a degraded drainage channel there that could provide the linchpin for a project," says John Markey, District 11 Permits Engineer. "That would necessitate placing four meters of fill on the drainage area

and a box culvert under it, and granting an encroachment permit so that INS and Customs staff could cross over the northbound ramp of Interstate 5 on a completely isolated and secure overcrossing.

"What that required, though, was some creative thinking about how the property could be made available for the new turnaround," Markey says.

The district had to work out a complex right-of-way arrangement that entailed a temporary airspace lease of the drainage area and eventual sale of the north parking lot right of way to MTDB. South of the ramp, Caltrans transferred a small parcel to GSA; GSA then licensed another small parcel to Caltrans for highway purposes.

"That was not the only place we had to push the envelope," Figge says. "Because the land constraints were so tight, MTDB, the project lead, had to grade the hillside behind the McDonald's facility so as to allow embarking and debarking passengers to use the second floor of the McDonald's to make their way to the San Diego Red Cars."

continued



Bicycle travel multiplied, and today you can see the manifestation of that travel, as there are dozens of bicycles padlocked to any available stationary feature within reach of the Red Car plaza.

That brought up the issue of Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Getting from the upper level to the lower level of the two-story building was by stairway. That meant construction of an elevator on private property at public expense. Once again, it took a lot of negotiation between a number of parties, but MTDB brought it off.

Among the governmental players were a total of 11 agencies, including Caltrans, MTDB, INS and Customs, the City of San Diego and a number of others, including those that had to sign off on MTDB's mitigated Negative Declaration.

The project is due for completion this fall, but a number of features are already in place, including the GSA parking lot and secure overcrossing, and better foot access to the border crossing.

When it is completed, the project will feature a new Red Car boarding plaza and a double-stack bicycle storage facility. "That's an interesting aspect of this," Figge says.

"After the World Trade Center tragedy in 2001, INS and Customs really clamped down on auto traffic crossing the border. Within hours, people found that getting across the border on a bicycle did not occasion the extensive search that auto travel did.

Suddenly, bicycle travel multiplied, and today you can see the manifestation of that travel, as there are dozens of bicycles padlocked to any available stationary feature within reach of the Red Car plaza. "The bicycles are not safe padlocked to the rail line fence. Nor are their riders safe, hopping off into congested traffic. The new facility will reduce that problem."

Later phases will include closing a portion of San Ysidro Boulevard to through traffic, re-grading the street, shifting the trolley tracks to create a larger plaza, and producing an open-air, pedestrian-friendly plaza with tinted and patterned concrete, palm trees, benches, and a police kiosk. The large turnabout will give pedestrians easy access to buses, taxis and jitneys.—*Gene Berthelsen*

96

On the Road to

HAPPY CAMP



A Trip Down Route 96

"We prefer not to talk about the past here," says Robert Schmalzbach, rising from his table in the Indian Creek Café in Happy Camp, California.

The past that Schmalzbach refers to includes the ancestral home of the Karuk Indians, highly exploitative gold mining and six busy lumber mills that once kept Happy Camp's air leaden with woodsmoke. Today, as you enter this town of 1000 people (down from somewhere around 1500 in its heyday) from upstream along the Klamath River on State Route 96, the mills are gone and only barren dredge piles remind you of the gold.

The Karuks, who resided along this part of the Klamath River for thousands of years, called the place "Athithúvuunupma." But once American settlers got here, about 1850, they renamed it Murderer's Bar because of what usually happened to claim jumpers in those days. How it came to be called Happy Camp is mostly speculation, although most explanations feature the good fortune of the gold pickings.

"Here, we prefer to talk about the future," Schmalzbach says.

continued

*Photos by
Don Tateishi*



A large, jocular man, Schmalzbach is a new Happy Camper, a refugee from California's contentious streets in the San Francisco Bay Area. Happy Camp's future, as Schmalzbach describes it, includes eco-tourism, a nine-hole Frisbee golf course and the world's largest dreamcatcher designed by his buddy, the putative mayor of Happy Camp, retired attorney Lou Tiraterra. A dreamcatcher is a traditional Indian craft object designed to intercept bad dreams and send them spinning away; we're not sure what this—at 32 m in circumference, strung with grapevines, and with more than 300 m of rope creating the web—will catch. Tiraterra, Schmalzbach and Dennis Day, all Thurberesque refugees from the less serene parts of California, are here to ensure that any new economic initiatives in Happy Camp's future don't disturb its "apathy, remorse and complacency."

Happy Camp's future, as foreseen by these jovial gentlemen, is one that may well be a metaphor for all of the hardscrabble towns along State Route 96, which shadows the Klamath the way Dion Sanders used to shadow a wide receiver.

The staples of the past—logging and mining—have fallen prey to rigid environmental controls that have leveled Happy Camp's six lumber mills and produced, along the banks of the Klamath, the "State of Jefferson:" four counties in northern California and one in Oregon that, if they could, would coalesce into a 51st state that presumably would levy no taxes, exert no environmental controls and just let the independent folks along this muddy river be.

Route 96, threading through one of the most primitive and downright pristine of California's countrysides, is a route of ferment. In the State of Jefferson, the residents cast a skeptical eye on flatlanders.

You enter Route 96 at the Randolph E. Collier Rest Area, itself a green haven that nestles down along the banks of the Klamath—a welcoming refuge from the rocky, barren ridges of the run-up to the Siskiyou Mountains that cleave Oregon from California hereabouts. Viewed from up on the ridge it looks like a green-carpeted miniature golf course, with swoop-roofed rest rooms, information kiosks and an a-building California welcoming center.

Route 96 will follow the Klamath for almost 250 km before abandoning it and transferring allegiance to the Trinity for a final jaunt to Willow Creek. Along its course it will cross

three of California's wildest rivers—the Shasta, Scott and Salmon—and dozens of creeks that, on a January day, could be mistaken for rivers themselves.

The Klamath is the second longest river in California. There's a lot of water in the Klamath, but there's a stir over how to divide it up. The Indians, who've resided along the river for thousands of years, exert their ancestral claim to the water for fishing and other activities; the latecomers demand it to irrigate the rich farmlands in the Klamath Basin upstream. And conservationists seek to protect an ecosystem that supports bull trout, bald eagles, marbled murrelets, northern spotted owls, Aleutian Canada geese, snowy plovers, endangered fish and other flora and fauna.

Along here, the State of Jefferson bubbles like a cauldron; an offshoot is the prideful naming of State Route 96 as the "State of Jefferson Scenic Byway."

Next to Route 96, the Klamath nibbles away at the toes of the steep surrounding mountains like a teenager assaulting a Big Mac. What it chews out of the side of one mountain's face, it deposits on the inside of the next curve, creating "bars," where humans erect ramshackle cabins, plant a hectare or so of alfalfa, put in a few fruit trees and—wo! What's this? A golf course, about 15 km downstream, a feature so out of keeping with its primitive surroundings that you wonder what it's doing there. The towns along the Klamath—Klamath River, Horse Creek,

Hamburg, Seiad Valley and Somes and Scott Bars—are situated on the largest of the Klamath's bars.

The Klamath is confined by precipitous mountains that soar a thousand to two thousand and more meters up from its banks. Floodwaters can bring the level of the river up by 25 m or more, sending waters crashing against the mountains and carving out enormous chunks and muddying the river all the way to the sea. For the most part, State Route 96 takes careful note of this and stays a respectful distance uphill.

Even so, the abundant rainfall and hydraulic action of the river still take their measure of the highway and, between Hamburg and Horse Creek, we come upon Tim Fitzpatrick and his maintenance crew out of Seiad Valley, gnawing away at the face of a slide that extends about 200 m up onto the mountain face. High up on the slide, a dozer operator clears the muck away from the slip plane and Fitzpatrick's crew hauls it to a disposal area a couple clicks away.

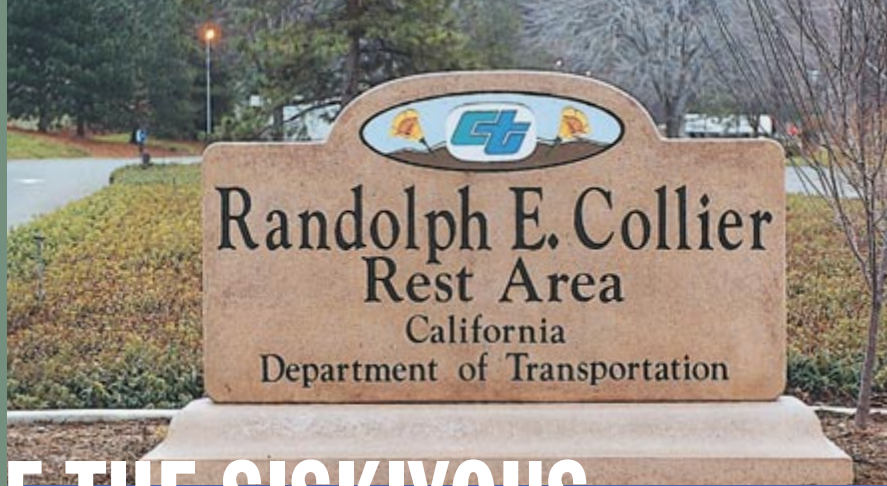
As you descend along this sinuous road from Interstate 5 to Weitchep, the weather and, with it, the surrounding hillsides, change. The mountainsides upriver are mostly rock and sagebrush, evidence that the skies have emptied themselves of rainfall before they got here. But about at Happy Camp, about 100 km downstream, the canyon narrows and Route 96 begins to fall under the influence of the coast. Up on the slopes, yellow pine and sugar pine,

continued on page 34



REST AREA

Randolph Collier



THE SILVER FOX OF THE SISKIYOU

At the very top of the state of California, nestled along the Klamath River among the rocky Siskiyou Mountains that separate California from Oregon, a traveler's first opportunity for a break from freeway driving is the Randolph E. Collier Roadside Rest.

Who was Randolph Collier and why is this facility named after him?

Senator Randolph Collier was elected to the State Legislature in 1938 to represent six northern counties including his home county of Siskiyou. His sparsely populated district sent him back to Sacramento year after year; he was reputed to know the name of every voter there. Collier held his seat until 1976—at 38 years, the longest-serving legislator in California history. After the enactment of term limits, that record is unlikely ever to be broken.

Over his years in the Senate, Collier served on the Governmental Efficiency, Finance, Revenue and Taxation and other committees, but transportation was his love and he ran that committee as if it were his personal fiefdom, always to the benefit of the citizens of his district.

The canny Collier, who came to be known as the "Silver Fox of the Siskiyou," gained fame as the principal author of the Collier-Burns Act of 1947, which mandated the first California Highway Plan. That plan, with the State assuming responsibility for highways in cities, established California's highway system as a model throughout the nation. His Highway Act of 1953 put highway construction on a frantic pace and later, in 1959, led to the adoption of the California Freeway and Expressway System.

Collier oversaw the establishment of the California Highway Fund, which, by earmarking motor vehicle taxes for highways, made revenues predictable, thereby enabling the highway agency to establish long-range priorities for its projects statewide. Collier also fashioned the compro-

mise between the counties north and south of the Tehachapis to guarantee them each a minimum of highway aid each year.

It is fair to say that the requirements of the program guided by Collier resulted in creation of the modern California Department of Transportation.

The Randolph E. Collier Safety Roadside Rest Area, a gem among Caltrans' 88 rest areas, is located on Interstate 5, 18 km south of the Oregon border along the banks of the Klamath River. Constructed in 1970 during the heyday of rest area construction at a cost of \$625 000, it provides a safe and attractive place for nearly a million visitors each year to stop, stretch their legs, and use the comfort station, picnic facilities and extensive lawns.

Today, to honor the senator, construction is under way at the rest area on a 140 m² interpretative center whose architecture matches that of the existing structures. The project, spearheaded by an agency representing Siskiyou County and its nine cities, is being financed by federal and local funds. Scheduled for opening this spring, the quarter-million-dollar center is the most recent manifestation of a 20-year partnership between Caltrans and area agencies to increase appreciation and use of the region's natural resources and visitor opportunities.

Interpretive themes will focus on the cities of Siskiyou County and the fisheries habitat and terrain of the Klamath River watershed. The goal of this partnership is to enhance the regional economy while providing orientation and additional security for rest area users. Later improvements will include a path and overlook of the Klamath River and a natural history museum featuring exhibits of native aquatic life and the life cycle of salmon.

Visitors should also pay heed to another denizen of Siskiyou County: the silver fox.—*Gene Berthelsen*



Douglas fir, madrone and tanoak, California laurel and live oak take over the slopes from riverbank to mountaintop and crowd the sides of the roadway.

Below you—as first the Shasta, then the Scott and Salmon rivers join the Klamath—the water roils and burbles, and the whitewater rapids, relatively tame upstream, form boiling cataracts. A number of whitewater raft companies operate on this river and you can see why.

It's easy to imagine this as Indian country—and much of it is returning to the purview of the Karuks, Huroks, Hupas and other original stewards of this land. At Happy Camp, the old town seems to molder along the riverbank, but up on the ridge, there's a major investment in trim new houses, a medical center, administrative offices and Head Start classrooms as the federal government attempts to redress at least some of the injustices done to these people over the past two hundred years.

At Hamburg, the Scott River's clear waters mix with those of the muddy Klamath. Up the Scott, there used to be a town of Scott Bar, but only a couple houses remain. Scott Valley, Scott River and Scott Bar ... John Scott is the one who found the first gold in the Siskiyou in the 1850s.

At Somes Bar, 65 km farther downriver, the Indians have reclaimed stewardship of the Klamath. Signs along Route 96 announce that you have arrived at the "Fata-wan-nun" spiritual trail and "Pic-ya-wish," the "center of the Karuk world."

After years of use by the federal government for forest management and American settlers for mining and logging—and more than one marijuana patch—the sacred ground above the Ishi-pishi Waterfall was turned over to the Karuk a few years ago, and here they conduct an annual ritual to ensure the return of salmon and acorns.

The Karuks believe that mankind, created here at Katimin, eventually will ascend to join the Milky Way from a nearby medicine mountain.

At Orleans, Route 96 leaves the Klamath and heads south along the Trinity and into the Hoopa Valley. Down here, the Karuk occupy more than 250 ha of land that is official Indian country. They consider an additional 500 km² to be their ancestral territory. And farther up along the Trinity lies the Hoopa Indian Reservation, the largest in

continued on page 36



Route 96 CAMP 41

About 75 km of Route 96—in the outer reaches of Siskiyou County between Happy Camp and Orleans—for almost 20 years between December 1955 and March 1975 was in the care of the 75 inmates of the Clear Creek Honor Camp, part of the State's Prison Road Camp Program.

The road camp program started in 1915 and operated for six decades, allowing thousands of prison inmates to learn construction skills in California's fresh air, away from prison walls.

The program, supervised by Caltrans' predecessor, the California Division of Highways, involved 48 camps at locations from one end of the state to the other, mostly in areas as remote as Route 96. At its peak in 1930, the program operated eight camps with a total of 750 inmates.

Prisoners were paid \$2.10 per working day in 1923. This was raised eventually to \$3.50. Food, clothing, medicine, medical attention, toilet articles, transportation, commissary items and guarding were deducted from this. If a prisoner's family was receiving State aid, two thirds was deducted from what was left. The reward for the capture of any escapee was deducted from the pay of the other prisoners.

In the program's early days, roads were built with pick and shovel, augmented by teams of horses pulling fresno scrapers. Later, the methods improved, except that the prisoners were allowed only to perform operations such as clearing, drilling and blasting, installing culverts and construction of rock masonry walls. State employees or private contractors operated any mechanized earth moving equipment.

Camp 41, as the Route 96 camp was known, the last of the honor camps, closed in 1975. There were no guards or firearms. The men were housed in tents, with "wholesome and plentiful" rations cooked by convicts. Convicts used picks and shovels, station cars, wheelbarrows, scrapers and road graders, but were not allowed to operate steam shovels.

A report on Camp 41 concluded that "the behavior of the men, both at work and in the camps, as well as their efficiency at work, compares favorably with that in free labor camps. As a rule a spirit of cheerfulness and contentment prevails; occasionally, the desire for freedom is irresistible, although the percentage of escapes is small. Undesirable characters, such as malcontents, shirkers, etc. are promptly returned to the prison."—*Gene Berthelsen*





California—and the ancestral home of Caltrans' Chief of Maintenance, Larry Orcutt.

The Hupa Indians live in the Hoopa Valley. History does not document why there are two different spellings of the Athabascan word, so we just follow tradition.

About 2600 people live in this valley, which, at 10 km long and three kilometers wide, is one of the wider river valleys in the Klamath Mountains. Any traveler looking for teepees, hogans and sweat lodges will probably be disappointed by Hoopa, which looks pretty much like the rest of the river towns of the Klamath country, with the exception of the Lucky Bear Casino. Route 96 takes you past orderly farms, trim homes, modern schools and lumber mills.

Unlike most other Indian tribes in California, the Hupa, in the mid-1800s, managed to fight off the American soldiers, keeping their culture intact. Today they are busy sustaining their lifestyle and maintaining a thriving logging industry. In 1988, they exercised their sovereignty by asking the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs to leave the Hoopa Valley.

But today, the Hupa seem to be about as serious about basketball as anything.

The Hoopa Valley team, the Warriors, is something of a phenomenon, consistently ranking high in Division V state basketball rankings against private schools that are able to attract gifted athletes to fill their teams.

South of Hoopa, Route 96 once again mounts the ridges and rides along with the Trinity for another 15 km or so to Willow Creek. A couple of kilometers from Willow Creek, you start to get the feeling that you're out of the wild and woolly country occupied by Route 96. The canyon slopes gently down to barns and meadows, rail fences, and soon, stores, schools, Bigfoot statues and the Caltrans Maintenance yard at Willow Creek.

Route 96 is certainly worth a day, maybe more, to give you about as clear a look at nature as you're going to get from a car in California. As you ride down along the Klamath, you get an expansive appreciation of its waters, starting as droplets melting from high mountain snows and joining together to make a rush to the sea.

Something refreshing about that.—*Gene Berthelsen*



The **CONE ZONE**

G O E S S T A T E W I D E

ENCOURAGED BY THE SUCCESS OF EARLIER

"SLOW FOR THE CONE ZONE" CAMPAIGNS THAT

HAVE RESULTED IN A DRAMATIC DROP IN WORK

ZONE ACCIDENTS, CALTRANS THIS SPRING

IS ROLLING OUT THE CAMPAIGN STATEWIDE

AT A COST OF ALMOST \$4 MILLION.

"We are tremendously gratified that the department is taking the campaign statewide," said Larry Orcutt, Chief of Caltrans Maintenance. "I know that every single person who has to work on a busy highway will be grateful that the department is willing to put in such a major effort for roadworker safety."

Orcutt noted that, in the areas where the "Slow for the Cone Zone" campaign previously had run, accidents in work zones involving motorists had dropped by a total of 25 percent and, even more important, that no Caltrans worker had been killed on the job in the past two years.

continued

Photos by Ed Andersen, Jon Hirtz

George Swift, Coordinator, Local 12, International Union of Operating Engineers, said, "Anything they can do to alert the public to Caltrans workers out there is great. We've gone two years without losing a worker. The pilot program has had great effect because the numbers are going down. More power to Caltrans."

Caltrans Director Jeff Morales led a memorial service in Capital Park in Sacramento in April to kick off the new campaign. "Our workers are our most precious resource," Morales said. "It is critical that we do everything possible to make their world safe."

The Capitol Park service featured a memorial made of 158 orange cones, shaped into a caution sign, each bearing the name of a fallen worker.

The service marked the start of the Cone Zone campaign, whose messages on radio, television and outdoor advertising are expected to reach more than 97 percent of Californians an average of 38 times each. While the program is aimed at adults between 25 and 49, it also will be seen 75 million times by teen-aged drivers, who are involved in a significant percentage of crashes and fatalities.

The previous award-winning campaign, which had run in Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area, resulted in two-thirds of Sacramento drivers and almost three-quarters of Bay Area drivers saying that they were now more alert to workers in work zones. In Sacramento, 93 percent of drivers and 86 percent of Bay Area drivers say they now drive more slowly in work zones—"so I don't hurt someone."

The new awareness campaign, assigned to the Sacramento advertising and marketing agency of Glass McClure, Inc., targets all 12 Caltrans districts, employing media that communicate with drivers just before or while they are in their vehicles, using 60-second radio, early morning television news, billboards and radio traffic sponsorships.

Television will be used to inform commuters as they are getting ready to go to work. Radio and outdoor advertising will provide frequent reminders to people in their cars when they are receptive and in a position to change their behavior.

The campaign is expected to use a number of other mechanisms to reach those who drive on highways where workers are at risk. It will tie in with such efforts as the "LA Traffic Guide," created with Unocal 76 stations to allow commuters to find alternate ways to their destinations. A minimum of 750 000 LA Traffic Guides will be printed, identifying current and future cone zone locations.

Workers on the campaign will consult with district staffs to launch public relations events just prior to introducing the paid advertising in order to create interest. They will seek news coverage where the campaign is new and where there are newly opening work zones. As a community outreach tool, driving schools will be asked to use Slow for the Cone Zone videos and brochures.

Among other ideas being considered for the campaign are:

Creating a tool kit for Caltrans districts to use to attract local media coverage with a media advisory template, news release template, public service announcements, talking points for speakers, promotional giveaways and brochures for the public.

Adopting a radio station in each market as a sponsor of the Slow for the Cone Zone campaign.

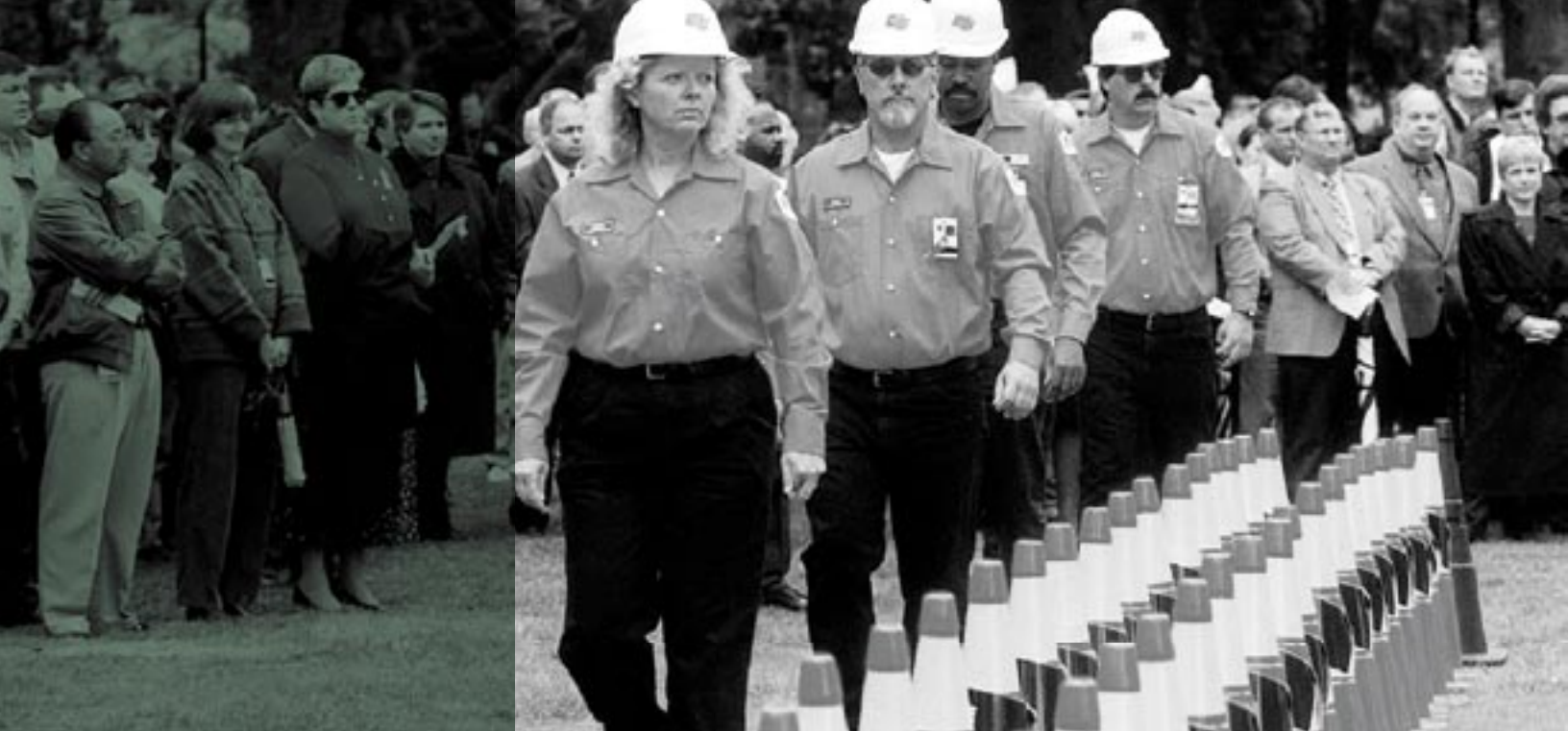
Sending 30- or 60-second Slow for the Cone Zone public service announcements to television stations.

Raising awareness of workers among future California drivers in high school driving classes.

"Slow for Cone Zone's safety messages create a natural fit with a number of organizations and companies that

Previous Cone Zone campaigns have been highly successful, raising driver awareness, reducing work zone accidents and preventing fatalities.





could be approached for potential partnerships," says Dennis Trujillo, Deputy Director for External Affairs. "We believe that other entities that promote safety with motorists, as well as those with access to key audiences, such as media outlets, will be approached for partnerships. These include insurance companies, the California Broadcasters Association, cell phone companies, major TV and radio stations, fast food corporations, driving schools and many others. The possibilities here are enormous."

The program will reach out to newspapers (including Spanish and other languages) and go beyond such subjects as transportation to consumer, environmental, health, lifestyle, op-ed page editors and editorial boards.

Television and radio news, traffic reporters, talk shows and public affairs shows will be pitched. The campaign will also approach trade, professional and consumer publications and corporate, industry association and government agency publications.

"We will work with the districts to identify other industries, government agencies, nonprofit groups and private

firms that would make good partnership matches, and formulate a plan to initiate their participation in the campaign," Trujillo said.

Trujillo lauded Glass McClure for its earlier efforts, noting that "California Slow For The Cone Zone 2000" had garnered national awards from AASHTO and a gold "Addy" Award from the Sacramento Advertising Club.

"Since the Cone Zone program started several years ago, we have had the vital cooperation of such organizations as the Office of Traffic Safety, the California Trucking Association, the California Dump Truck Owners' Association, more than 30 Northern California radio stations, Clear Channel Outdoor and the International Union of Operating Engineers, to name a few."

"We thank them for their efforts toward this one, single, over-riding objective: the safety of our workers," Trujillo said.

*Caltrans
roadworkers
honor their
fallen comrades
in an annual
commemorative
ceremony.*



Highways as Main Streets

CONTEXT SENSITIVITY

"The Caltrans Steering Committee on context sensitive solutions has been enormously successful," says Caltrans Director Jeff Morales, "not only having recommended dozens of initiatives, but assuring that its direction is communicated throughout the organization and to other agencies of government. And I have been very impressed with the way that people throughout the department have taken to the guidance the steering committee has offered."

The steering committee, having met its overall objectives, wrapped up its work last year and will now meet only annually to assess how its guidelines and direction are being heeded.

"I'm proud of the work of the committee," says District 1 Director Rick Knapp, its chairman. "We had an excellent membership—a cross section of the best from a variety of disciplines within Caltrans as well as representatives from interest groups, the federal government and local agencies. Everybody was enthusiastic and cooperative; this was the kind of intergovernmental effort that we hope for so often but don't always attain."

The steering committee, as one of its final tasks, developed a plan for institutionalizing context-sensitivity in departmental activities. Among its features are research to develop policies and incorporation of context-sensitivity in design guidelines, including the Caltrans Project Development Procedures Manual. Starting this year, a context-sensitivity training series is to be delivered to Caltrans staff and local agencies. The department has issued a Director's Policy on context-sensitivity and prepared monthly district newsletter articles that focus on context-sensitivity.

Team members and others have made presentations in director's meetings, functional conferences, staff meetings, to various boards and commissions and to local communities, resource and other public agencies. This publication

has carried a number of articles on the Caltrans cultural shift to a context-sensitive way of doing business.

"The initiatives developed by the task force cut across the spectrum of transportation development both at Caltrans and its sister agencies," Knapp says. They include design guidelines for main streets that are state highways, modules for training academies, tools and applications and inclusion of context-sensitivity considerations in the:

- California Transportation Plan
- Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan/Regional Plans
- RTP Guidelines
- Regional Agency Overall Work Programs
- District System Management Plans
- Transportation Corridor Reports
- Transportation System Development Programs
- Intergovernmental Reviews

Currently, the Division of Design is revising the Project Development Procedures Manual and will incorporate context-sensitivity in design decision documents. Caltrans is reviewing its routine maintenance and operations to identify opportunities for minimizing impacts to communities and the environment. It is also including context sensitivity categories in its Sustained Superior Accomplishment, Delivery Plan, Excellence in Transportation, Capital Project Delivery, and Tranny awards programs.

Perhaps the most extensive effort so far is a handsome set of guidelines for work on state highways that happen to be local main streets. The guidelines, "Main Streets: Flexibility in Design and Operations," were produced jointly by the Caltrans Divisions of Design and Traffic Operations.



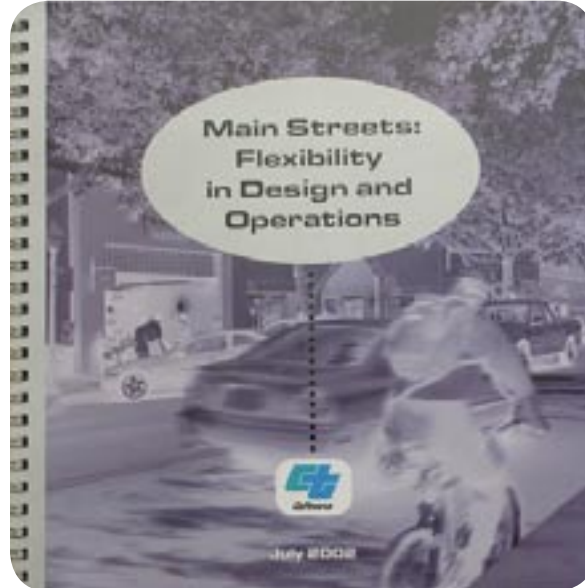
The Caltrans Main Streets booklet, said Jeff Morales in his forward, "... emphasizes Caltrans' commitment to the production of transportation projects that make state highways that happen to be local main streets more walkable and livable. It is a manifestation of a trend that is sweeping rapidly across America—and across California: Context-Sensitive Solutions."

Nothing is more critical in stamping an identity on a town than its main street. Such streets, at the heart of many communities, are places for citizens to get out of their cars. They connect residents with their town center and provide the front door to local businesses, social institutions and, often, to city hall. Access to them for pedestrians, bicyclists and public transit is essential to a community's health.

In the past, Caltrans and other transportation agencies generally have been most concerned with getting inter-regional travelers through towns as quickly as possible, while ignoring the amenities that make a community's city center healthy.

"Many communities have been frustrated in understanding why one city was successful in creating a more walkable and livable downtown while they could not," says Karla Sutliff, Chief of the Division of Design. "This document provides clarity on such matters for department staff and local agencies."

"More important," Sutliff says, "some individuals in the department and local agencies have considered context



The Caltrans Main Street guidance identifies visual clues for establishing a city's identity.

sensitivity to be all about non-standards. This is not what it is about and the guidance does well in providing many options for improving a main street to meet community goals with full standard geometric features."

The guidance emphasizes partnerships and encourages Caltrans staffers to talk with community decision makers and citizens as early and often as it takes to produce a project that expresses a community's character. "Community involvement is vital to project planning and requires full engagement with members of a community in order to ascertain local values" the booklet says.

continued



A major goal of the guidelines is to encourage flexibility in designing highways that respond to community goals yet operate efficiently and safely.

"There is little that is exotic or unorthodox here," says Knapp. "The Main Street guidelines do not supersede other established Caltrans manuals, procedures or practices. Rather, they complement our design practices, policies and standards." Knapp emphasizes that real deviations from policy or standards will continue to require an engineering analysis and, when appropriate, an approved Design Exception Fact Sheet.

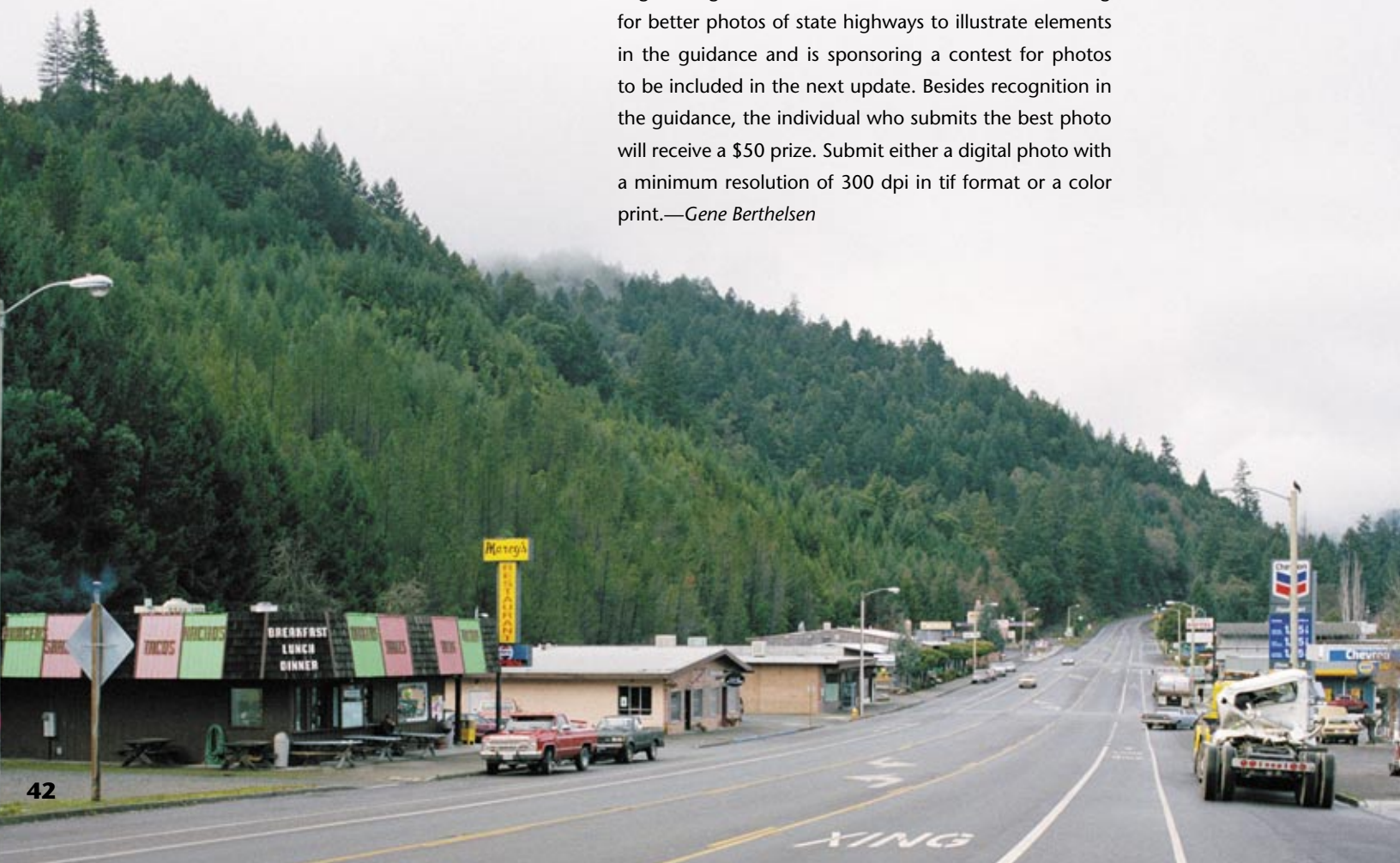
The guidance focuses on many options, some of which have been controversial in the past. They deal with such traffic calming techniques as roundabouts, synchronized signals and lowered speed limits. The booklet identifies visual cues that establish a town's image. These include banners, raised medians, traffic islands, ornamental lighting, planters, flags, shelters, and benches or other street furniture, all of which also help drivers recognize that they are entering an area of increased pedestrian activity.

The guidance discusses pedestrian and bicycle elements such as sidewalks and crosswalks that incorporate aesthetic surface treatments, sidewalk bulbouts or curb extensions, mid-block crossings, pedestrian refuges and bike lanes. Decorative lighting fixtures, landscaping and transportation artwork, the subject of controversy for many years, are included.

The booklet discusses when and where it may be appropriate to consider reduced lane widths and options for textured intersection pavement, on-street parking and trees in medians.

California's main streets provide the locus of its culture," Jeff Morales says. "It is our responsibility, with the facilities we develop and maintain, to make them as safe and healthy as it's within our power to do."

The team members are currently preparing an update to the guidance and anticipate a second edition later this summer. Anyone with ideas for addition to the guidance should contact Paul Engstrom or Carolyn Dudley, Division of Design, or Alex Kennedy, Division of Traffic Engineering. The main streets committee is also looking for better photos of state highways to illustrate elements in the guidance and is sponsoring a contest for photos to be included in the next update. Besides recognition in the guidance, the individual who submits the best photo will receive a \$50 prize. Submit either a digital photo with a minimum resolution of 300 dpi in tif format or a color print.—Gene Berthelsen





From Birds and Beasties to the Bar

Before an audience of almost 40 family members, friends and co-workers, former Central Region Senior Environmental Planner Denise Zuniga was officially sworn in as a member of the California Bar at a ceremony in December at the Santa Fe Basque Restaurant in Fresno.

Zuniga came to Caltrans in 1990, working as a student assistant for four and a half years until she graduated from college. She graduated with a double major, earning a B.S. in Construction Management and a B.S. in Sociology from California State University, Fresno. She returned to Caltrans while attending law school, first as a student and then as a temporary environmental planner. In January 1998, she came on board as a full-time environmental planner. She quickly moved up to associate environmental planner, and became a senior environmental planner in June 2000.

In June 2001, Zuniga graduated from the San Joaquin College of Law, earning her Juris Doctor. After taking the state bar exam, in May 2002, she received notice that she had passed the exam. She was sworn in by Retired Fresno County Superior Court Judge Annette LaRue. With the ad-



ED ANDERSEN

Denise Zuniga, now a member of the California State Bar and a Caltrans attorney .

mission ceremony, Zuniga became an official member of the California Bar Association.

Fortunately, Caltrans did not lose this valuable employee to an outside law firm. Zuniga accepted a position as a Deputy Attorney in the Caltrans Legal Division in Sacramento. She began her new duties there in February 2003.

—Jane Sellers, District 6 Research Writer

Above the Bar



people

Family

The Family that Works Together...

Anyone looking for a good-sized bundle of Caltrans experience could do well to take a look at Skip Close and his family. Between them, this family of Caltrans brats has piled up 107 years of experience with the department.

Close's father, Armon Close, hired on in 1946 after his tour of World War II duty with the United States Marine Corps. Over his 34 years with the department, he rose from equipment operator in Petaluma to Superintendent of that maintenance district, although he had an extensive detour through Napa, Walnut Creek, Donner Summit, Yuba City, Nevada City, San Francisco and Burlingame, before returning to Petaluma. The elder Close retired in 1980. He died in 1999.

"We were always moving," says Skip, who today is the project manager of an effort to develop a new, computerized, integrated financial management system in the Division of Innovative Finance.

Skip himself started "pulling weeds on the freeway in District 4" as a student at California State University, San

Francisco, where he was a history major with an objective of being a teacher. Although he did succeed in obtaining his degree and teaching credential, he soon found out that there was an oversupply of teachers at that time and that he could make more money as a Caltrans maintenance worker than as a teacher. He quickly embarked on a 30-year career that has taken him through Districts 4, 10 and 3 as a maintenance worker, equipment operator, leadworker and supervisor, before moving into administrative functions in Training and Personnel in District 3, then to headquarters in the Contracts Office. He assumed his present duties in 1998.

Skip's brother, Bill Sanders, started work with what was then the California Division of Highways in 1961, performing surveying and materials testing; he spent 40 years in District 3, mostly in construction, becoming the department's expert on labor compliance, construction safety, and local agency reviews. "Bill retired in 2001," Skip says, "after becoming so adept in his field that, even though he was in District 3, he was called on to answer questions from all over Caltrans regarding Labor Compliance issues."

The Close family tradition is currently in the hands of young Paul Close who, after graduating from CSU Chico with a degree in Construction Management, worked with several private construction contracting firms before seeing the wisdom of a Caltrans career. He currently is a Transportation Engineering Technician in District 10 Construction.

"We've got 107 years invested in the department together as a family," says Skip. "We'll see how far Paul can extend that—and of course we'll be looking to the grandchildren to keep it going forever."

He adds that Paul's son, Austin, loves playing with construction toys.—Gene Berthelsen

Three generations of the Close family have served Caltrans.



ED ANDERSEN



Cat's Meow

Being a receptionist at any busy office can be a challenging and rewarding experience. The job at Caltrans District 2 isn't any different.

Recently, receptionist June Rickett received a call from Alana Moirano, a motorist from Rodeo in Alameda County, who had seen a cat running astray at the Herbert S. Miles Safety Rest Area just north of Red Bluff on Interstate 5. She had tried unsuccessfully to catch the cat and hoped that the Caltrans maintenance crew might capture it and find it a good home.

"The lady was very concerned and asked if it would be okay if she checked on the cat's status in a few days," Rickett says. "I contacted the crew and asked that they trap it, then followed up a few days later. The crew indeed had taken the transient cat into custody."

When Mrs. Moirano called back to inquire as to the cat's future, Rickett informed her that the Red Bluff staff had captured it and were in search of a good home.

"The lady was very concerned that the cat might be turned over to a shelter and euthanized," Rickett says. "I said we were doing the best we could, but didn't know what might happen if the cat were taken to the Humane Society. By now I had developed a relationship with this concerned cat lover and wanted to make sure her fears were allayed."

When, a few days later, Mrs. Moirano called again, she was told that the cat had yet to be adopted. "She decided she would take the stray in herself," Rickett says. "She drove to Red Bluff from her home in Rodeo to claim the cat. It now resides happily with her and husband Mark in Rodeo. I received a Christmas card from the family with a photo of 'Frankie' reclining in the easy chair."



GEORGE BRANO

*June Rickett,
inspiration for
cat fanciers.*

"Working reception can sometimes be a challenge," Rickett says. "But when you feel as if you've helped someone and made his or her day better, it's all worth it."

Not only does Ms. Moirano feel better, but Frankie is one lucky cat. Two special people have taken extra time and care to make sure he lives his nine lives in luxury!

—Denise Yergensen, District 2 Public Affairs

Here Kitty...



people

Atta Girl

Carole Sanders, a District 8 Transportation Engineer, was chosen recently to represent the Mineta Institute at the Eno Transportation Foundation's 10th annual Leadership Development Program on transportation public policy.

Resident Engineer of the Year, Carole Sanders.

The nonprofit Eno Foundation, dedicated to improving all modes of transportation, was founded in 1921 by William Phelps Eno with the goal of improving traffic control and safety. Sanders attended the foundation's Washington conference last year, and reviewed a number of presentations by various interest groups seeking to influence the development of the upcoming Transportation Act of 2003.

The Mineta Transportation Institute had been invited to nominate an outstanding graduate student from its Graduate Transportation Management Program. Sanders was one of only 20 graduate students nationwide to be chosen to participate in the intensive five-day conference.

"Meetings, meetings meetings," Sanders says. "At breakfast, lunch and dinner and in between. And we were carted all over Washington D. C. It's about as hard as I've ever worked at a conference" She adds that she had an opportunity to meet a number of members of congress as well as Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater.

"Actually it was a great opportunity to network and to gain perspectives on how transportation policies are drafted, debated, shaped and ultimately determined," she says.



MARIO C. MAALA

Sanders has completed nine of the 10 classes for the after-hours Masters in Transportation Management Program through San Jose State University and will finish in June. "I now know a lot of acronyms," she jokes. "When you work in construction, you just get a set of plans and go build. But now I understand how different projects get developed and end up with a construction schedule."

Sanders had previously received the institute's Continuing Student Performance Award.

Sanders was also recently named Resident Engineer of the Year for 2002 by District 8 Construction. At that time, she was Resident Engineer on five construction projects on Interstates 5, 71 and 91. She has now been promoted to Senior Transportation Engineer in the district's construction office, where she provides support on Contract Change Orders and other construction matters.

—Holly Kress, District 8 Public Affairs Office



Caltrans Mudjacker Ends Arson Spree

"I just did what anyone would have done," says Tim Kochheiser, a leadworker on a Caltrans mud-jacking crew in District 6.

But Kochheiser's act of good citizenship recently netted him a \$10 000 reward for the apprehension of an arsonist who had been plaguing Kochheiser's home town of Auberry, north east of Fresno.

Kochheiser was awakened at about 1:00 in the morning by the barking of his dog, Chelsea, which raised a distinctive bark whenever an intruder approached his home. "I looked out the window and could see that a guy had stopped on the road a little way from my home and that he had started a small fire. I asked my wife, Becky, to call 911, then I went out to investigate."

At this point, the arsonist, seeing that he had been spotted, fled in his vehicle. Kochheiser, thinking to record the license number, gave chase in his own vehicle and caught the arsonist after a distance of a couple of kilometers.

At that point, things got ugly.

"When I stopped and confronted him, he tried to run me down with his vehicle," Kochheiser says. Kochheiser climbed back into his own vehicle and the arsonist tried to ram his car. At this point, the arsonist fled and Kochheiser reported the license plate and a description of the vehicle to the authorities.

"It took about four months before the guy was actually charged with the arson, along with two counts of assault with a deadly weapon (the attempts to run Kochheiser down)," Kochheiser says. Ultimately the man was convicted with Kochheiser's help, which included identifying him in a photo lineup and testifying at a preliminary hearing. The man's conviction stopped a rash of fires that had been plaguing the area.

"When citizens come forward, it makes a difference," said Josh Chrisman, a California Department of Forestry investigator assigned to the case.

Kochheiser returned to his home after the incident to find that the fire started by the arsonist had grown to about two acres and had burned to within about 50 feet of his home. He assisted the Forestry Department in putting the fire out.

Kochheiser plans to save the \$10 000 and use it to help put his daughter, Kimberly, now 14 years old, through veterinary school.

Mud-jacking is a process of cutting a hole in pavement slabs showing signs of failure and pumping a fly ash mixture into it to stabilize and reposition the slab.

—Gene Berthelsen

*Tim Kochheiser,
Caltrans
mudjacker and
good citizen.*



KEVIN KAST



people

School and Civic Volunteer Racks Up the Hours

Their youngest child finished elementary school in the Kings Canyon Unified School District two years ago, but that hasn't kept Rick McComb, a Caltrans Highway Maintenance Supervisor at the Pinehurst Maintenance Station in Fresno County, and his wife, Lee, from volunteering hundreds of hours a year for the school, the school district and elsewhere in the community.

Rick McComb, with kids on a recent High Sierra tour.

"My wife and I have been active volunteers at Miramonte Elementary School since 1984, serving as officers in the Parent-Teacher Club, as support people and on the school Site Council. We still are—even though we have no children currently attending—and we plan to stay active. We regularly help plan and carry out the various fundraisers," says Rick, who began his career at Caltrans in December 1992 as a seasonal permanent intermittent employee.

All four of Rick's children attended the school. Three are now grown, and his 13-year-old son attends Dunlap Middle School in the district. Yet the elementary school remains a committed focus.

"Each year, I take two vans loaded with kids to visit historic sites throughout the high country," Rick says. "The tour centers on settlement of the Sierra and includes logging communities and mills no longer in existence. The timber industry in this area was a big factor in the growth of the San Joaquin Valley and the settlement of many towns. We also touch on the National Park Service and how it is everyone's responsibility to preserve the past for the future. I enjoy telling students about what their grandparents did and what it was like then. Visiting these sites, which are fast disappearing, passes on a certain legacy to the next generation."

In recent years, Rick and his wife have added to their school duties. "Lee and I have been volunteers at the Dunlap Middle School for the past two years, both on the Parent-Teacher Club and on the school Site Council. We are firmly committed to helping children in any way we



can. We agree that 'your children are only young once' and you need to be there for them," he says.

The volunteerism and civic commitments of Rick and his wife's don't stop there. They are also active volunteers with the Central Sierra Chamber of Commerce. And for the past three years, Rick has been active with the Boy Scouts of America. He is a scoutmaster with Troop 416 in the Squaw Valley area.

"I am very fortunate to work for Caltrans, an organization that is aware of how very important community involvement is. I use vacation time for all of my volunteer work. Last year, I spent two weeks on summer vacation: one with 17 Scouts on a trans-Sierra backpacking trip covering 100 km and spending the last night on the very summit of Mt. Whitney, and the other with my wife and 16 Scouts on a camping trip to the coast at Morro Bay," Rick says.

For both Rick and his wife, the expended hours are all worth it. Said Rick: "We believe in working for children, helping them develop into responsible members of the community. After all, the future is in their hands."

—Jane Sellers, District 6 Research Writer

Editor's Notebook

Down on Route 99, where

you turn off to get to Fairmead, sits an emblem of a California that has almost vanished—an easier, informal place everybody thought they were coming to live in and, in the process, pretty much erased.

Californians in the age of John Steinbeck would've pulled off the highway, sluiced across a gravelly, bumpy parking lot and come to a halt in front of a Mammoth Orange when the car they were riding in got tiresome.

The Mammoth Orange—what an architectural historian today would call “programmatic architecture” because its structure told you what it sold—sang to its potential customers of a California where you could “pick an orange right off a tree.”

At the Mammoth Orange, a regular piece of white butcher paper disgorges a hamburger that's made fresh on the spot; its squishy-soft bun is slathered with mayo, and you get a thick, juicy piece of ground beef, fresh-cut lettuce and a hunk of tomato, all produced close around hereabouts. It comes to you by way of a friendly person dressed in the clothes she wore from home this morning. It's not one of those mammoth burgers everybody likes to crow about these days, but it's pretty darned good.

At the Mammoth Orange you eat your burger outside in the San Joaquin Valley's real weather, hot or chilly—whatever Mother Nature intended—at one of about eight mismatched, well-worn, orange or green picnic tables, and you're assailed by the roar of a steady river of semis laden with the Valley's agricultural bounty and bound for America's dining tables.

The Orange faces an uncertain future. The turnoff to Fairmead is an at-grade intersection traversed daily by maybe 40 000 vehicles a day and it can be something of a caution to pull across that river of traffic into the Orange's parking lot. When Caltrans brings Route 99 up to today's standards, this intersection will have to be closed, sending its customers on a two-mile trip off the highway for a fresh orange juice.



There's been a big squabble going on about how to handle the Orange on that day, all of it writ in fine print in federal and state laws and regulations dealing with environmental mitigations and right of way purchases; right now it looks as if the Orange will sit right where it is, outside the right of way fence.

There are even some differences about whether the Orange is worth saving. It and other structures like it were built on skids in the first place and moved from place to place depending on where the customers were. But this Orange, the last one on Route 99, put down roots; moving or refurbishing it would be an expensive proposition and nobody is sure why or how any agency of government should pay for it.

We have a proposal—impertinent maybe—but for the fun of it, here it is: how would it be if McDonald's, Burger King, Jack in the Box, Wendy's, Carl's Jr. and the rest of the multi-billion-dollar American hamburger industry got together to move and refurbish the Orange? Truck it to the nearby California Information Center just down the road, and let it operate just as it does now, as a living hamburger museum with a bumpy parking lot, friendly people and fresh burgers and sunshine. Those hamburger titans could share in the profits.

That way, the industry could remind us, in ground meat and piccalilli, of the California that used to be.

